JOE BENITEZ'S

Lady Mechanika™

Vol. 8

Benitez · Chen · Oum · Sotelo · Garcia · Heisler

The Devil in the Lake

THE COMPLETE

VOLUME EIGHT

EIGHTH VOLUME

LADY MECHANIKA™
The Devil in the Lake

Art Direction by:
Joe Benitez

Cover Illustrations and Chapter Openers by:
Siya Oum & Beth Sotelo

Cover Gallery Art by:
Joe Benitez & Beth Sotelo
(except where noted otherwise)

Additional Cover Gallery Art by:
Ceci de la Cruz
Steve Firchow
Peter Steigerwald
David Finch
Jamie Tyndall

Production:
Michael Heisler
Marcia Chen

Book Design:
Mark Roslan
Peter Steigerwald

Lady Mechanika Logo by:
Peter Steigerwald

LADY MECHANIKA, VOL. 8. First printing. March 2025. Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of publication: PO BOX 14457, Portland, OR 97293.

Copyright © 2025 Joe Benitez. All rights reserved. Contains material originally published in single magazine form as LADY MECHANIKA: THE DEVIL IN THE LAKE #1-4.

"Lady Mechanika," its logos, and the likenesses of all characters herein are trademarks of Joe Benitez, unless otherwise noted. Image Comics logo designed by Rob Liefeld. "Image" and the Image Comics logos are registered trademarks of Image Comics, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for journalistic or review purposes), without the express written permission of Joe Benitez, or Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events, and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, or places, without satirical intent, is coincidental.

Digital Edition.

For international rights, contact:
foreignlicensing@imagecomics.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5343-3630-8

Story
by JOE BENITEZ
and M M I I I. CHEN

Art
by SIYA OUM

Colors
by BETH SOTELO
MIKE HIKE GARCIA
and SABINE RICH

Letters
by MICHAEL HEISLER

Joe Benitez's Lady Mechanika in The Devil in the Lake

Lady Mechanika created by Joe Benitez

Chapter One

HIDDEN AMONGST THE FURTHEST REACHES OF THE SIBERIAN MOUNTAINS, SURROUNDED BY TOWERING PEAKS AND SHROUDED BY SUPERSTITION, LIES ***LAKE LABYNKYR.***

THOUGH IT RESIDES IN ONE OF THE COLDEST REGIONS KNOWN TO MAN, ITS WATERS NEVER FREEZE, EVEN IN THE HEART OF WINTER.

THE FEW VILLAGERS TENACIOUS ENOUGH TO DWELL IN THIS FRIGID DOMAIN STAY FAR AWAY, AND WARN THEIR CHILDREN TO NEVER SWIM ITS WATERS.

SPISH

FOR THEY HAVE ALL HEARD THE TALES PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS UPON GENERATIONS, TALES ABOUT SOMETHING LURKING WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF THE LAKE.

SOMETHING ANCIENT...

ETO...

SOMETHING VAST...

ETO... CHYORT...

SOMETHING...

CHYORRRR...

...EVIL...

LONDON HOME OF MARIA ALEXANDROVNA, GRAND DUCHESS OF RUSSIA.

...THE *LABYNKYRSKY CHYORT*, THEY CALL IT. THE DEVIL IN THE LAKE.

AND YOUR FRIEND WENT IN SEARCH OF THIS LAKE MONSTER?

WITH HER HUSBAND, YES. THEY--

--NO, NO, NOT THE RASPBERRY! I WANTED THE STRAWBERRY BISCUITS. HAVE COOK PREPARE A NEW TRAY.

AT ONCE, YOUR HIGHNESS.

THIS ALL STARTED, YOU SEE, WHEN ONE OF THE LOCAL FOLK FOUND A FOSSIL BY THE LAKE SHORE, A GIANT TOOTH OVER A FOOT LONG. ONLY IT TURNED OUT NOT TO BE A FOSSIL AT ALL.

THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY TESTED IT AND DISCOVERED IT WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS OLD. THE SCIENTISTS WERE ALL ABUZZ.

AN UNDISCOVERED SPECIES, THEY CONJECTURED, POSSIBLY FROM THE PREHISTORIC AGE, SURVIVING FOR MILLENNIA IN THIS REMOTE AND ISOLATED BODY OF WATER!

IMAGINE IT! A LIVING DINOSAUR! IT WOULD EXPLAIN ALL THE LEGENDS AND RUMORS OF A MONSTER IN THE LAKE. THE UNIVERSITY BEGAN PLANNING AN EXPEDITION RIGHT AWAY, TO SEARCH THE LAKE FOR MORE EVIDENCE OF THESE CREATURES.

MY FRIEND ELIZABETH FAIRFIELD, MRS. OWEN NOW, HER HUSBAND IS A PALEONTOLOGIST HERE AT CAMBRIDGE. WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS, WELL, NAUGHT WOULD DO BUT HE MUST TAKE PART IN THAT EXPEDITION.

SO ELIZABETH CONTACTED ME, AND I CONTACTED THE IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY. I ARRANGED FOR THEM TO JOIN THE EXPEDITION, AND THEY BROUGHT THEIR SON ALONG, A LITTLE BOY OF ONLY EIGHT YEARS.

THEY TREATED IT LIKE A HOLIDAY, A HARMLESS ADVENTURE. I DON'T THINK ANYONE BELIEVED THEY WOULD FIND AN ACTUAL DINOSAUR.

BUT THEY DID? THEY FOUND SOME KIND OF CREATURE IN THE LAKE?

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THEY FOUND. A FEW DAYS AGO, ELIZABETH'S MOTHER CAME TO ME IN TEARS. SHE'D HAD A DREAM, SHE SAID, A PREMONITION.

SHE MUST HAVE SPENT TOO MANY YEARS IN RUSSIA. SHE WAS MY GOVERNESS, YOU KNOW, MY ENGLISH GOVERNESS. SHE USED TO SCOFF AT ALL OUR LITTLE STORIES.

ELIZABETH AND I WERE THE ONLY GIRLS IN THE HOUSEHOLD, AND MY BROTHERS WOULD TEASE US ENDLESSLY, FRIGHTENING US HALF TO DEATH WITH TALES OF THE *LESHY* IN THE GARDENS AND THE *DOMOVOI* HIDING UNDER THE BED.

MRS. FAIRFIELD ALWAYS SAID THEY WERE JUST SILLY RUSSIAN SUPERSTITIONS.

BUT NOW HERE SHE WAS, SPEAKING OF DREAMS AND PREMONITIONS! SHE WAS CONVINCED SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAD HAPPENED TO HER DAUGHTER.

SO I REACHED OUT TO THE UNIVERSITY, JUST TO ALLAY HER FEARS, I THOUGHT. BUT THEY SAID THEY HADN'T HEARD FROM THE EXPEDITION IN WEEKS!

THEY HAD BEEN SENDING REPORTS EVERY DAY, USING ONE OF THOSE AIR TELEGRAPH DEVICES. BUT THEN ONE DAY, ALL COMMUNICATION SUDDENLY STOPPED.

THE UNIVERSITY WANTED TO SEND A SEARCH PARTY, BUT THE LAKE IS IN A VERY REMOTE LOCATION, ACCESSIBLE ONLY BY LAND, THROUGH MOUNTAIN PASSES WHERE THERE ARE NO ROADS.

WITH WINTER COMING, THE JOURNEY WOULD BE TOO DIFFICULT AND TOO DANGEROUS.

BUT NOT FOR YOU.

ELIZABETH IS MY OLDEST AND DEAREST FRIEND IN THE WORLD! WE GREW UP TOGETHER, LIKE SISTERS. I WOULD BE DEVASTATED IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO HER!

LADY MECHANIKA, YOU ARE A RENOWNED EXPERT IN SUCH AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY IN HUNTING MONSTERS.

IF ANYONE CAN FIND AND RESCUE HER, IT IS YOU!

I SHALL DO MY BEST, YOUR HIGHNESS, BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND...

IF THERE IS SOME KIND OF MONSTER IN THAT LAKE, I'M SORRY TO SAY BUT IT MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE.

I UNDERSTAND. I PRAY THAT IS NOT SO, BUT IF IT IS, THEN YOU MUST AVENGE HER! FIND THE CREATURE AND DESTROY IT!

I'VE HIRED A GUIDE WHO CAN TAKE YOU TO THE LAKE, AND TWO OF MY OWN IMPERIAL GUARDS WILL ACCOMPANY YOU. I'VE ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS.

YOU USUALLY WORK WITH A PARTNER, DO YOU NOT? I ASSUME HE WILL BE ACCOMPANYING YOU AS WELL?

ACTUALLY, I DON'T THINK MR. LEWIS WILL BE COMING ON THIS TRIP, NO.

WHY EVER NOT? I MUST SAY, I WOULD FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IF THERE WERE TWO MONSTER EXPERTS ON THE JOB.

IT...IT'S COMPLICATED...

MECHANIKA CITY.

KNOCK KNOCK

MR. LEWIS? IT'S ME, MECHANIKA.

I HAVE A JOB FOR US...IF YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED?

HUNTING A LAKE MONSTER IN SIBERIA. A RUSSIAN PRINCESS IS FOOTING THE BILL SO THE MONEY WILL BE GOOD...

I...

I KNOW YOU'RE STILL PUT OUT WITH ME BUT I...I JUST THOUGHT...

...MAYBE...

MR. LEWIS, BEFORE I GO, I...I JUST WANTED TO SAY...I NEED TO TELL YOU I...I'M SORRY FOR...

...FOR EVERYTHING.

YOU WERE RIGHT. IT'S YOUR LIFE AND YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE IT AS YOU WISH, I SHOULDN'T HAVE INTERFERED.

IT WAS PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME TO ASSUME THAT I KNEW BETTER. I...I MAKE MISTAKES TOO, YOU KNOW.

APPARENTLY I MAKE A LOT OF MISTAKES...

I UNDERSTAND WANTING TO DO SOMETHING... SOMETHING GREATER THAN YOURSELF...SOMETHING THAT MIGHT, SOMEHOW, MAKE UP FOR ALL THOSE MISTAKES.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THAT... THAT SOMETHING... AWAY FROM YOU. I...

I'M SORRY, ARCHIBALD.

KEEP AN EYE ON WINIFRED, WILL YOU?

I...

FAREWELL, MR. LEWIS.

SIBERIA.

DEVUSHKA...

HERE. FOR YOU.

OH! MY HANDS DON'T NEED...

VERY, VERY COLD OUTSIDE.

THANK YOU. *SPASIBO.*

ARE YOU LADY MECHANIKA?

LADY MECHANIK

I AM.

WELCOME TO SIBERIA!

I AM YEVGENY SERGEYEVICH MOROZOV. THE IMPERIAL PRINCESS HAS ASKED ME TO SERVE AS YOUR INTERPRETER DURING THIS JOURNEY.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU, MR. MOROZOV.

ZHENYA! EVERYBODY CALLS ME ZHENYA!

YOU HAVE ALREADY MET OUR GUARDS BORISLAV NIKONOVICH AND IVAN ALEXEYEVICH. THE PRINCESS'S VERY OWN IMPERIAL GUARDS! QUITE AN HONOR!

VANYA! HAVE YOU NO MANNERS? COME AND TAKE THE LADY'S BAGS!

DA, DA!

IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT. I PREFER TO CARRY THEM MYSELF.

OH? YOU ARE CERTAIN? VERY GOOD. NEVER MIND, VANYA!

I MUST TELL YOU, I AM VERY HAPPY TO HAVE SUCH GUARDS ACCOMPANYING US. THE PRINCESS SAYS YOU ARE SOME KIND OF SUPER HEROINE, YES? BUT THIS IS DANGEROUS COUNTRY!

ONLY CRIMINALS AND INSURGENTS AND UNCIVILIZED NATIVES LIVE OUT HERE! AND I JUST HEARD THAT SOME PRISONERS ESCAPED FROM A MINING CAMP NEARBY! BUT WE NEED NOT WORRY BECAUSE NO ONE WOULD EVER DARE TO ATTACK IMPERIAL GUARDS!

YES, IT IS VERY GOOD OF THE PRINCESS TO SEND US BORYA AND VANYA, EVEN IF THEIR ENGLISH IS GARBAGE! HOW MANY YEARS NOW THEY HAVE BEEN IN YOUR COUNTRY AND STILL THEY CAN BARELY SAY HELLO AND GOODBYE!

NO MATTER, I CAN SPEAK ENOUGH FOR ALL OF US, HA! ENGLISH, RUSSIAN, EVEN YAKUT! WHICH IS GOOD BECAUSE OUR GUIDE SPEAKS NOT A WORD OF ENGLISH OR RUSSIAN!

HERE HE IS NOW, WITH THAT CRAZY BIRD OF HIS. I HAVE NO FONDNESS FOR BIRDS, I MUST TELL YOU. HIS NAME IS TYGYN--THE MAN, NOT THE BIRD. THE BIRD HE CALLS KHOTOY.

TYGYN SAYS WE SHOULD DEPART SOON WHILE WEATHER IS GOOD.

IT WOULD BE VERY BAD, VERY BAD INDEED, TO BE STUCK IN THE MOUNTAINS DURING STORM.

BUT WE HAVE PROCURED LODGINGS HERE IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO REST FIRST AND LEAVE IN THE MORNING?

WE CAN LEAVE NOW.

WILL WE BE TRAVELING BY SLED?

TYGYN SAYS IT IS BEST WAY TO REACH LAKE BUT WE HAVE--

SNIFF

SNIFF

BAAA

OH, MY APOLOGIES, MISS MECHANIKA! I DO NOT KNOW WHY THEY ARE ACTING SO. THE REINDEERS ARE USUALLY VERY FRIENDLY. SEE HOW GENTLE THEY ARE WITH THE CHILDREN.

I GUESS IT'S JUST ME THEY DON'T LIKE.

SUOKH! SUOKH!

NOT TO WORRY, NOT TO WORRY! WE BROUGHT A MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE WAY TO TRAVEL ANYWAY...

PUT PUT PUT

AH, HERE IS OUR TRANSPORTATION NOW!

THE VERY FINEST STEAM CARRIAGE MONEY -- THE IMPERIAL HIGHNESS'S MONEY -- COULD BUY, SPECIALLY OUTFITTED FOR TRAVEL THROUGH SIBERIAN SNOWS!

COME, COME! INSIDE, VERY COMFORTABLE!

PTFF

BAH!

«DON'T WORRY! DON'T WORRY! IT WILL BE FINE, I TELL YOU!»*

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

NO, NO, NOT AT ALL!

TYGYN INSISTS ON TAKING SLED. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE CARRIAGE CAN MAKE IT ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS. BUT THIS VEHICLE HAS TRAVELLED THROUGH THE URALS IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER! IT WILL BE FINE!

THEY ARE ALL BACKWARDS HERE, YOU KNOW, FRIGHTENED OF TECHNOLOGY. BUT NO MATTER! WE, AT LEAST, SHALL TRAVEL IN COMFORT!

COME, LET'S GET YOU SETTLED IN.

ACTUALLY, I THINK IT MIGHT BE FUN TO RIDE THE SLED, IF THE REINDEER DON'T MIND!

*() -- TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
«()» -- TRANSLATED FROM YAKUT.

WHOOSH

CLK CLK CLK CLK CLK CLK

WHOA! WHOA!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT...WE ARE NOT EVEN AT MOUNTAINS YET! ARE YOU SURE YOU CANNOT FIX PROBLEM?

AH WELL! I SUPPOSE TYGYN WAS RIGHT AFTER ALL. WE SHALL HAVE TO ALL GO ON HIS SLED!

TOO...HEAVY...

WE CANNOT JUST LEAVE CARRIAGE IN MIDDLE OF ROAD!

I CAN MOVE IT.

BUT HOW CAN YOU...?

:GASP!:

WITCHCRAFT!

NO WITCH-CRAFT, JUST MY PROSTHETICS. SHALL WE CONTINUE?

SKWEEL

SHWWFF

CLK CLK CLK CLK CLK CLK

WHAT IS TYGYN DOING?

OH, THE PRAYER RIBBONS! A VERY QUAINT PRACTICE AMONG HIS PEOPLE. TYING THEM AROUND CAMP IS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT US FROM MISCHIEVOUS SPIRITS.

I MUST TELL YOU, HIS PEOPLE BELIEVE THESE WOODS ARE HAUNTED. OF COURSE, THIS IS RUSSIA. EVERY FOREST HERE IS HOME TO SOME *LESHY* OR *RUSALKA!* BUT IT IS NOTHING TO WORRY YOURSELF OVER. JUST SOME LOCAL SUPERSTITIONS.

IT WOULD BE WISE THOUGH TO STAY WITHIN THE CAMP TONIGHT. SPIRITS OR NO, THERE ARE MANY WILD ANIMALS. BEARS AND TIGERS AND WOLVES ROAM THE WOODS AND WOULD BE QUITE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU FOR DINNER!

SSSSSS

MORE PRAYERS?

A LOCAL CUSTOM, TO OFFER A PORTION OF YOUR FOOD TO THE SPIRITS AS A GESTURE OF THANKS AND GOODWILL.

SSSSSS

IF I WAS SAFE AND WARM AT MY HOME IN THE CITY, I WOULD SAY IT IS JUST SILLY SUPERSTITION.

BUT OUT HERE WITH NOTHING BUT A TENT BETWEEN US AND THE HAUNTED FOREST...I DO NOT THINK IT WISE TO INSULT THE WINTER QUEEN IN THE VERY HEART OF HER OWN REALM!

BETTER WATCH OUT, VANYA! LESHY GONNA GET YOU! *HA HA HA!*

HEH HEH, I AM NOT BABY! I DO NOT BELIEVE IN FAIRY STORIES!

SSSSSS

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY.

YOU ARE MOST WISE, MISS MECHANIKA! VERY--

DEMON! DEMON!

<LORD PROTECT US!>

LADY, MY APOLOGIES, BUT YOU...YOUR EYES! THEY APPEAR TO BE...RED!

MY EYES ARE ALWAYS RED. IT'S JUST A SIDE EFFECT FROM MY PROSTHETICS, NOTHING TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT.

<ONLY DEMON HAVE RED EYES!>

<DON'T BE FOOLISH, BORISKA!>

<THE PRINCESS TOLD US LADY MECHANIKA IS DIFFERENT FROM NORMAL PEOPLE, THAT SHE HAS SPECIAL POWERS! IT IS WHY SHE HIRE HER TO HUNT MONSTER!>

NOW STOP ACTING LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN AND I WILL TELL YOU A REAL FAIRY STORY!

THIS IS A TALE ABOUT MORANA THE WINTER QUEEN, GODDESS OF THE DEAD, WHO TAKES US TO THE AFTERLIFE...

TYGYN? I THOUGHT YOU SAID WE SHOULD STAY OUT OF...

OH! WHO... ARE YOU LOST?

HELLO?

HI, I LEELEE! WAN' BE...

...FRIEND...

NO...

I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU...

GASP!

I...I'M SORRY...

NIKA...

YOU PROMISED YOU WOULD SAVE US!

YOU ORPHANED OUR LITTLE GIRL!

NO...NO...

NOOOOO!!!

GASP!

WHAT'S WRONG?

THERE IS SOMETHING IN--

SHH!

IMPERIAL GUARDS! HMPH!

LET THEM SLEEP. WE CAN HANDLE IT.

«TYGYN! DO NOT GO ALONE! WHERE ARE BORYA AND VANYA?»

«TYGYN! WHAT IS IT?»

OH...

IT LOOK LIKE BEAR OR TIGER ATTACK.

LDP LDP

WE SHOULD GO. THE DEAD WILL ATTRACT MORE PREDATORS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TYGYN SAYS IT IS MORE MERCIFUL TO END THE CUB'S SUFFERING NOW. HIS MOTHER IS DEAD, HIS PACK GONE.

WOLVES CANNOT SURVIVE ALL ALONE.

HE'S NOT ALONE.

THE NEXT DAY.

HOW MUCH FURTHER?

LPP LPP

JUST TO TOP OF THIS PASS, THEN WE GO DOWN INTO VALLEY.

BUT TYGYN SAYS CLIMBING DOWN IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN CLIMBING UP. WE ARE LUCKY WEATHER IS GOOD...

A FEW HOURS LATER.

WHOOSH

whine

SHHH... WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS, LITTLE ONE...

AWHOOOSH

TYGYN!

KRAK

WHOOOOA!

«TYGYN! ARE YOU OKAY?»

WATCH YOUR STEP!

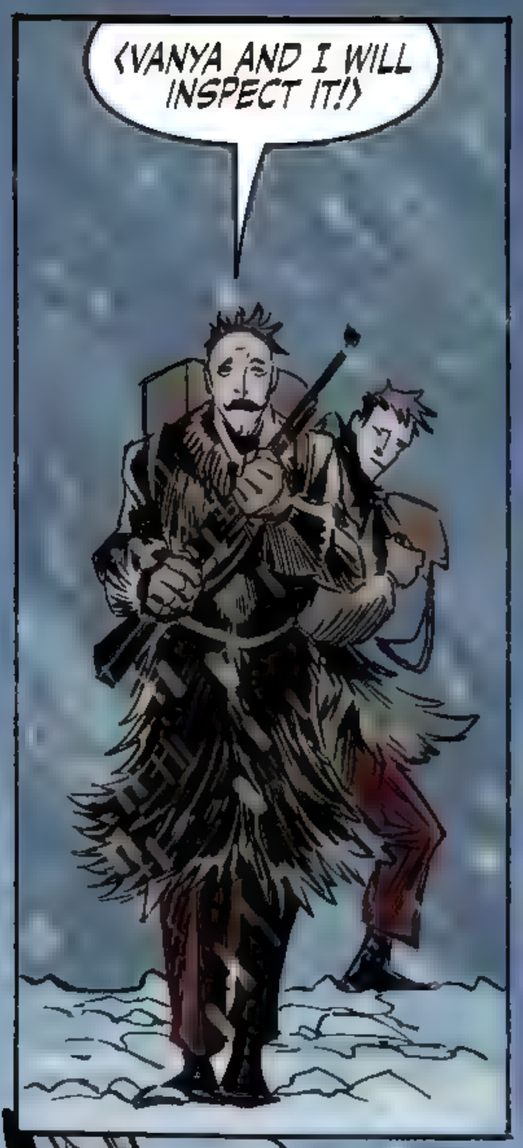
WHOOO

VANYA!

I GOT YOU!

HERE! HOLD ON TO THIS SO WE DO NOT GET SEPARATED!

TYGYN SAYS THERE IS CAVE AHEAD, BUT IT MAY BE OCCUPIED!


‹VANYA AND I WILL INSPECT IT!›

‹DO YOU SEE ANYTHING?›
‹NO. IT IS TOO DARK...›

GRRRR
BLAM BLAM

BLAM BLAM
AAAHHH!

VANYA! ARE YOU OKAY?

IS A... A...

RAWR

UNGH!

GRRRK

OOMPH!

Chapter Two

THE WORLD IS FULL OF DANGERS KNOWN AND UNKNOWN...

...SEEN AND UNSEEN...

MISS MECHANIKA!

SHE...SHE'S GONE...

MURDEROUS THUGS THAT PROWL THE STREETS...

BUT OF ALL THE PERILS THAT ONE MAY ENCOUNTER...

...NONE ARE MORE TREACHEROUS THAN THE MONSTERS THAT LURK WITHIN THE MIND...

HURRICANES THAT DROWN THE VERY EARTH...

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME, MECHANIKA.

WELCOME TO HELL!

WHAT... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

YOU DIED, MECHANIKA. NOW YOU CAN SPEND THE REST OF ETERNITY HERE WHERE YOU BELONG!

NO, I...

HERE WHERE YOU PUT US!

'NIKA BAD!

I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T...I DIDN'T MEAN TO...

TOO LATE FOR SORRY!

NOOOO!

GO AWAY! I SAW HER FIRST!

SHE DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU, LESHY.

SHE ISN'T YOURS! NOT YET, ANYWAY...

BUT PERHAPS IF I SEND HER SOME MORE DELICIOUSLY FRIGHTFUL DREAMS, SHE COULD BE YOURS SOONER, EH?

NO. I AM HERE FOR ANOTHER. LEAVE THIS ONE ALONE. SHE GAVE THE PROPER OFFERING.

BAH! YOU'RE NO FUN!

WHERE IS VESNA? SHE KNOWS HOW TO HAVE A GOOD TIME...

THIS IS THE HEART OF MY REALM, LESHY. SPRING DOES NOT COME HERE OFTEN...

UNGH....

KTO TI!

NI DVIGAYSYA!

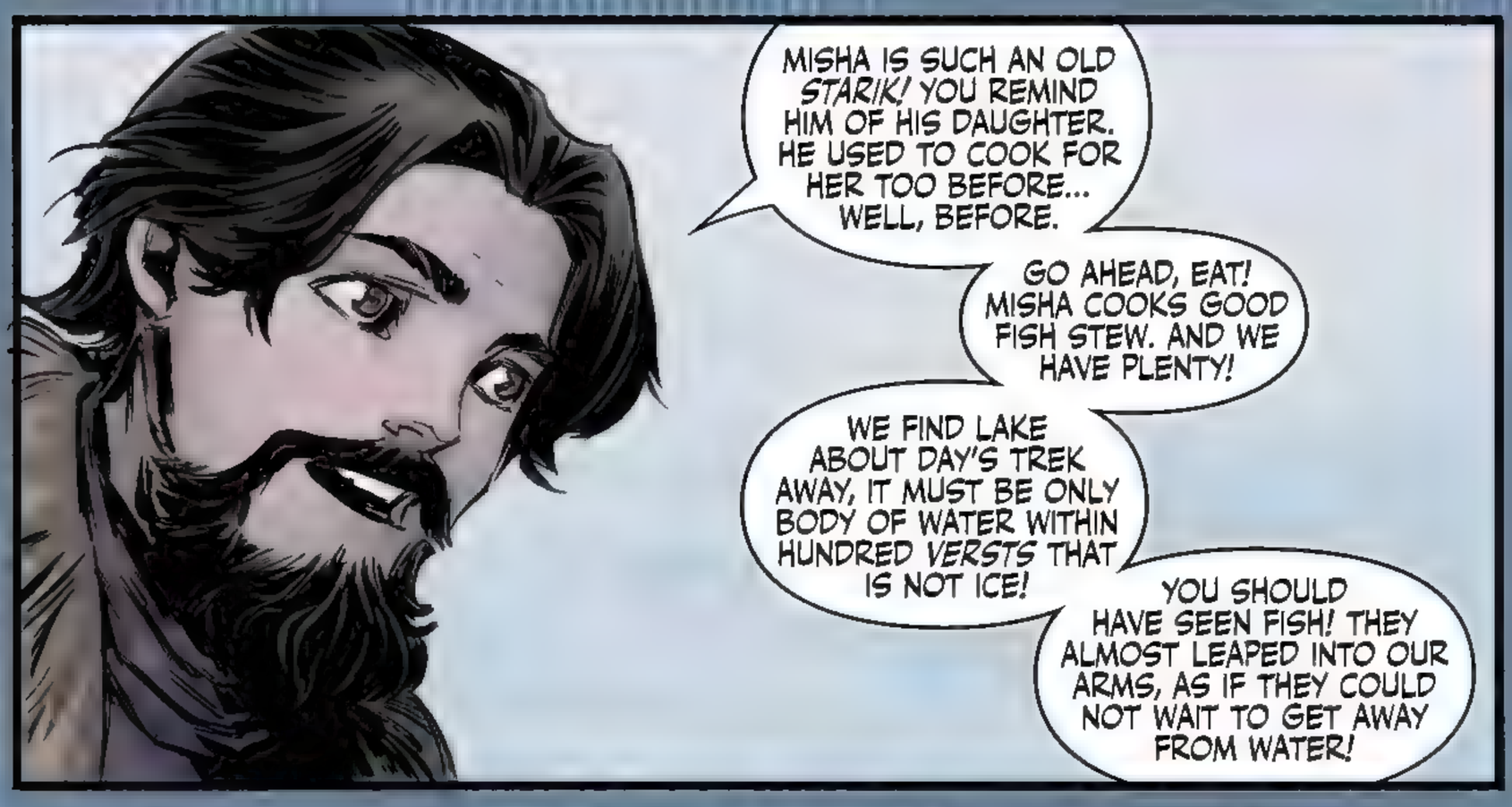
UNNGHHH...

SLRP
UNGH...
SLRP
HELLO THERE, LITTLE ONE...
AHOO!
AH, YOU ARE AWAKE!
ENGLISH, YES? YOU SPEAK WHEN YOU SLEEP.
WHERE... WHO...? WHO ARE YOU?
WE ARE BUT SIMPLE TRAVELERS.
YOU ARE VERY FORTUNATE THAT WE FIND YOU AFTER YOUR ACCIDENT.
MY...IS THAT MY GUN?
THIS? WE FIND IT ON GROUND. YOU...
BOZHE MOY!
LIE BACK DOWN! YOUR EYES...THERE IS BLOOD!
MISHA!
THAT...THAT'S NOT FROM THE...THE ACCIDENT. I HAVE A CONDITION THAT CAUSES MY EYES TO APPEAR RED. A CHILDHOOD...ILLNESS.
ILLNESS? IT IS... CATCHING?
NO, IT'S NOT CONTAGIOUS.
<WHY DID WE LISTEN TO YOU, MISHA! WE SHOULD HAVE LEFT HER ON MOUNTAIN. LOOK AT HER DEMON EYES! SURELY SHE IS CURSED!>
IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, I PROMISE. HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP?
ALMOST TWO DAYS. MISHA BY THE FIRE, HE BANDAGED YOUR HEAD. IT WAS BLEEDING MUCH AND YOU HAD FEVER. YOU ARE VERY LUCKY WE ARE HERE TO HELP.
I SEE YOU TOOK BOTH MY GUNS.
SUCH WEAPONS CAN BE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE OR DEATH HERE IN WILDERNESS.
A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR SAVING YOUR LIFE, YOU AGREE?

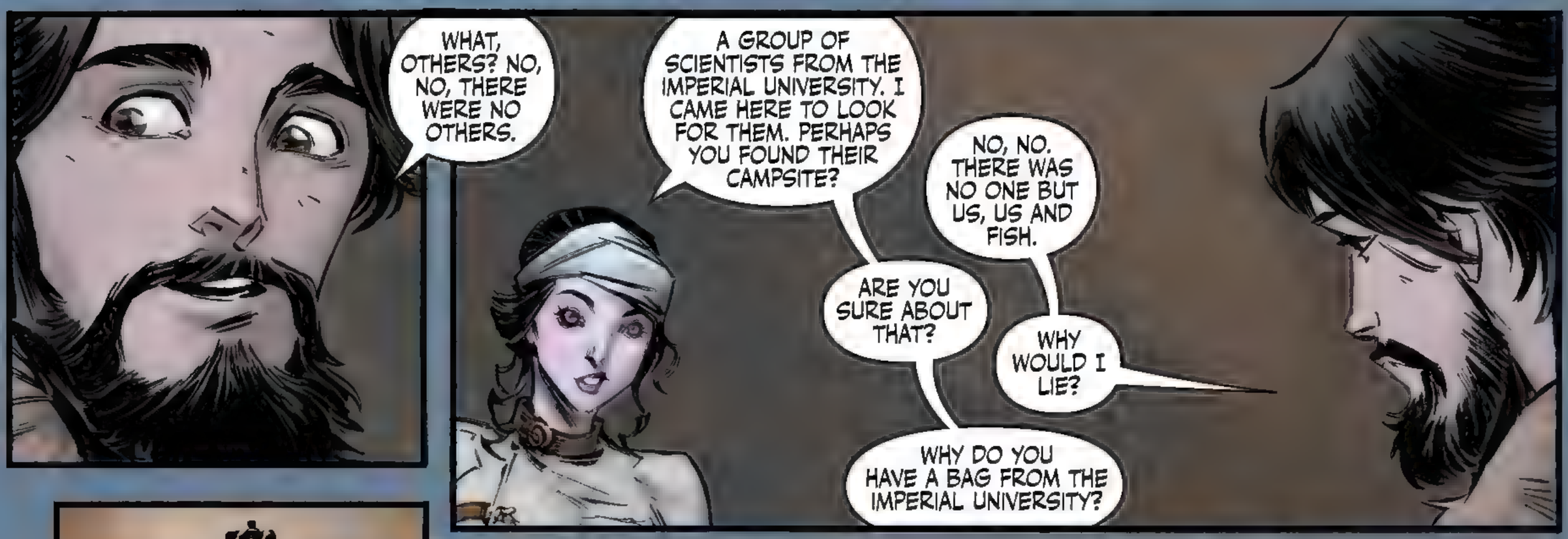
‹PUT THAT THING AWAY!›
‹CAN'T YOU SEE THE POOR GIRL IS SICK! SHE DOESN'T NEED YOU WAVING A GUN IN HER FACE!›

‹HERE, DEVUSHKA. EAT.›
THANK YOU. SPASIBO.

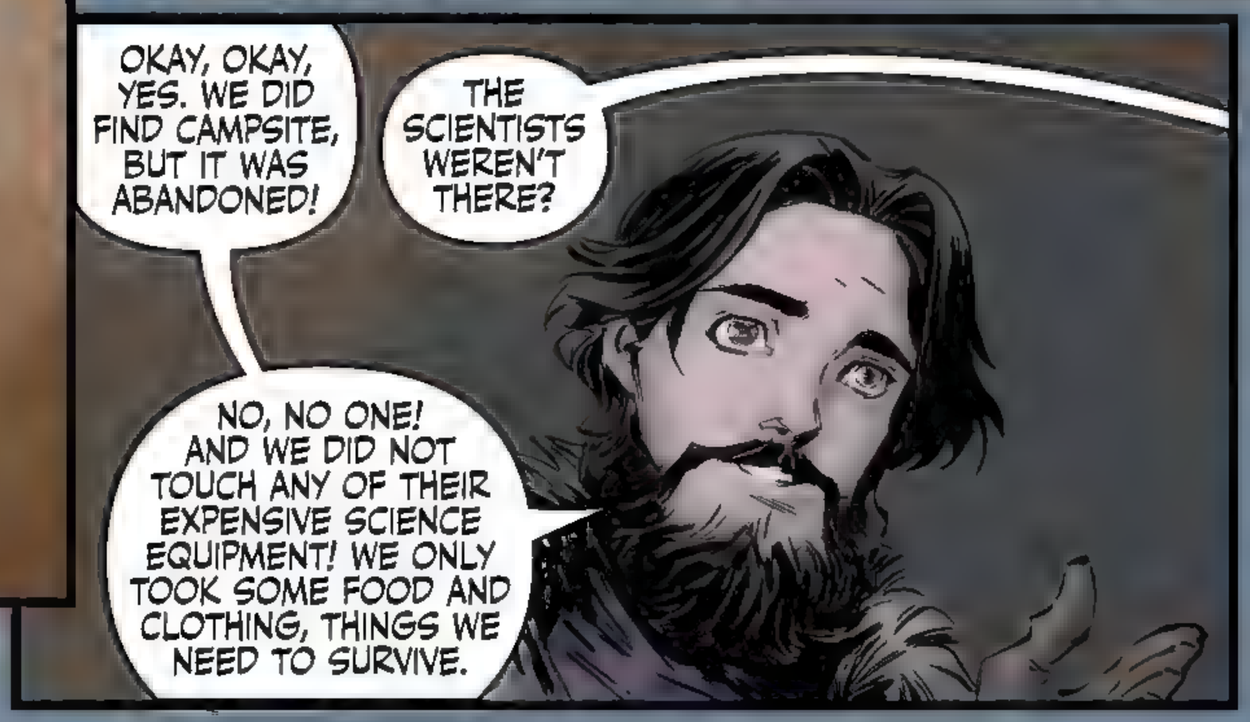
‹YOU STOP SCARING HER!›
‹OKAY, OKAY! I PUT GUN AWAY!›


MISHA IS SUCH AN OLD *STARIK!* YOU REMIND HIM OF HIS DAUGHTER. HE USED TO COOK FOR HER TOO BEFORE... WELL, BEFORE.
GO AHEAD, EAT! MISHA COOKS GOOD FISH STEW. AND WE HAVE PLENTY!
WE FIND LAKE ABOUT DAY'S TREK AWAY, IT MUST BE ONLY BODY OF WATER WITHIN HUNDRED *VERSTS* THAT IS NOT ICE!
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN FISH! THEY ALMOST LEAPED INTO OUR ARMS, AS IF THEY COULD NOT WAIT TO GET AWAY FROM WATER!

THE LAKE...DID YOU SEE ANY OTHERS THERE?


WHAT, OTHERS? NO, NO, THERE WERE NO OTHERS.
A GROUP OF SCIENTISTS FROM THE IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY. I CAME HERE TO LOOK FOR THEM. PERHAPS YOU FOUND THEIR CAMPSITE?
NO, NO. THERE WAS NO ONE BUT US, US AND FISH.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
WHY WOULD I LIE?
WHY DO YOU HAVE A BAG FROM THE IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY?

Императорский Университет


OKAY, OKAY, YES. WE DID FIND CAMPSITE, BUT IT WAS ABANDONED!
THE SCIENTISTS WEREN'T THERE?
NO, NO ONE! AND WE DID NOT TOUCH ANY OF THEIR EXPENSIVE SCIENCE EQUIPMENT! WE ONLY TOOK SOME FOOD AND CLOTHING, THINGS WE NEED TO SURVIVE.

YOU ARE THE ESCAPED PRISONERS, FROM THE MINING CAMP.

YOU HEARD OF US?

I WAS WARNED OF SOME CONVICTS WHO HAD RECENTLY ESCAPED AND WERE STILL AT LARGE AND DANGEROUS.

GUILTY.

GUILTY OF BEING FREE-THINKING STUDENT! AND NOT AT PROPAGANDA-SPEWING IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY BUT AT LEGITIMATE ACADEMY OF LEARNING, WHERE ASKING QUESTIONS AND DEBATING DOGMA IS ENCOURAGED INSTEAD OF CRIME!

I WAS SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS OF HARD LABOR, FOR WHAT? FOR SAYING THAT EVERYONE, EVEN PEASANTS AND SERFS, HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS! SO VERY DANGEROUS!

I THOUGHT YOUR EMPEROR FREED ALL THE SERFS?

:SNORT: WHAT GOOD IS "FREEDOM" WITHOUT MEANS TO EXERCISE FREEDOM?

BEFORE, THEY OWE SOME OF HARVEST TO OWNERS. NOW THEY OWE OUTRAGEOUS LOANS AND TAXES TO STATE! THEY ARE WORSE OFF THAN WHEN THEY WERE SERFS!

BY WHAT RIGHT DO THESE RICH NOBLES AND POLITICIANS LIVING IN THEIR FANCY *DVORETS* HAVE TO DICTATE THEIR RULES TO US? THEY HAVE NO IDEA HOW REAL PEOPLE LIVE!

YOUR ENGLISH IS REMARKABLY GOOD FOR A PEASANT.

AH WELL, I AM JUST POOR, HUMBLE ACADEMIC. I MAY NOT BE PEASANT, BUT I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS NOT!

WAS IT NOT YOUR OWN COUNTRYMAN MR. LOCKE WHO SAID ALL INDIVIDUALS ARE CREATED EQUAL, AND HAVE SAME RIGHTS TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND PROPERTY?

HOW CAN IT BE FAIR THAT A SMALL FEW EXPLOIT MANY, THAT OUR BACK-BREAKING LABOR LEAVES US SICK, STARVING, AND OFTEN DEAD, WHILE RICH NOBLES LIVE LIKE KINGS FROM OUR LABORS?

IT IS NOT RIGHT, AND IT MUST BE CHANGED!

DO THE OTHERS SHARE YOUR... REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS? IS THAT WHY THEY WERE IN PRISON TOO?

THEM? THEY HAVE NO TIME TO THINK OF ANY VIEWS, REVOLUTIONARY OR NO. THEY ARE TOO BUSY JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE!

"KOLYA, THEY CALL HIM THIEF BECAUSE HE HUNTED GAME IN FOREST, TO FEED HIS HUNGRY FAMILY.

"BUT THEY SAY FOREST BELONGS TO ROYALS SO HUNTING THERE IS STEALING, THOUGH NO ONE GOES THERE BUT ONCE PER YEAR, AND FOR SPORT, WHILE PEOPLE LIVING THERE ARE STARVING!

"SERGEY LOST HIS JOB IN FACTORY AND COULD FIND NO OTHER WORK, SO HE WAS FORCED TO LIVE IN STREETS AND BEG FOR FOOD.

"BUT NOBLES FIND THIS OFFENSIVE SO THEY MAKE IT CRIME TO NOT HAVE HOME!

"AND MISHA, WELL, MISHA DID KILL A *STRAZHA*, A POLICEMAN...

"BUT IT WAS ONLY TO DEFEND HIS DAUGHTER'S HONOR! IF HE WAS RICH, HE WOULD HAVE PARDON, BUT NO! HE IS JUST POOR PEASANT SO...OFF TO SIBERIA!"

THAT IS HOW REAL PEOPLE LIVE IN RUSSIA! AND THAT IS HOW THEY KEEP IT, INTENTIONALLY! THEY WANT US POOR, STRUGGLING JUST TO SURVIVE, SO WE DO NOT HAVE TIME OR ENERGY TO EVEN THINK ABOUT JOINING TOGETHER.

THEY KNOW THAT THERE ARE MORE OF US THAN THERE ARE OF THEM! THEY ARE AFRAID OF US!

WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE IF WE JUST--

SLAT

SPLAT

‹ENOUGH, VADIK! LET THE POOR GIRL REST!›

THEY ARE TIRED OF HEARING MY SPEECHES.

‹OKAY, OKAY! I STOP TALKING!›

HA HA HA HA

LADY MECHANIKA? ARE YOU THERE?

<IMPERIAL GUARDS!>

NO! STOP! THEY'RE HERE FOR ME, NOT YOU!

<WE WON'T GO BACK!>

BORISLAV! IVAN! DON'T--

<DROP YOUR WEAPONS OR I'LL...I'LL SHOOT HER!>

<VADIK! NO! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE--?>

AAAAH!

BOOM

BLAM

BLAM

AAARGH!

THUD

KRNK

THMP

UNGH...

CHORT!

GRRRR

UNGH!

YIP

KRAK

AAGH!

FWOM

<RUN!>

<VANYA... ARE YOU... ARE YOU OKAY...>

VANYA!

<I...I THINK I... I THINK I'VE BEEN SHOT...>

MISHA, NO...

I'M SORRY... I...I DIDN'T MEAN FOR ANY OF THIS TO HAPPEN...I...I SHOULD'VE...

DO...

...DOCHENKA MOYA...

THEY ARE GETTING AWAY! DID YOU...

OH NO, VANYA...

‹IT...IT'S GETTING DARK...›

IS HE...?

‹I AM WITH YOU, VANYA.›

‹I...I'M SCARED...›

‹SHHH... YOU'LL BE BETTER SOON...›

come home...

‹I...I...›

‹...HOME...›

MECHANIKA CITY

HRRAWW

UNCLE ARCHIE?

HRRAWW HRRAWW

UNCLE ARCHIE!

WHA... HUH?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

FREDDIE! THERE YOU ARE! I WAS LOOKIN' FOR YOU...

I WAS AT SCHOOL.

OH, RIGH', RIGH'! I 'EARD THE PROFESSOR WAS OUT O' TOWN AGAIN SO I FIGURED I'D STOP BY AN' SEE HOW YOU WERE DOIN'.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO SIBERIA WITH LADY MECHANIKA?

THA'S HER BUSINESS, NO' MINE.

YOU'RE HER BUSINESS PARTNER!

NO' ANY MORE.

YOU CAN'T LET HER GO OFF TO SIBERIA ALL BY HERSELF!

SHE'S A GROWN WOMAN WHO CAN 'ANDLE HER OWN AFFAIRS. SHE DOESN' NEED A BABYSIT'ER.

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH HER, HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED?

EVER SINCE THE FOUNDERS' DAY FAIR, SHE HASN'T BEEN ACTING LIKE HERSELF. SHE'S BEEN...UPSET ABOUT SOMETHING.

SHE'S IN NO STATE TO GO OFF ON A DANGEROUS MISSION ALONE. YOU NEED TO GO AFTER HER AND HELP HER!

WHA'? NO! IT'S NONE O' MY BUSINESS!

AND UNLIKE A CERTAIN MEDDLESOME BUSYBODY, I KNOW BET'ER THAN TO STICK MY BLOOMIN' NOSE IN MAT'ERS THAT DON' CONCERN ME!

I DON' GO POKIN' AROUND INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S AFFAIRS, ASSUMIN' I KNOW BET'ER THAN EVERYONE ELSE, RUININ' THEIR LIVES AND MAKIN' A BLOODY MESS OF THINGS!

PEOPLE SHOULD *MIND THEIR OWN!*

I...I'M SORRY I'M A... A MEDDLESOME BUSYBODY.

WHA'? NO...NO, I DIDN' MEAN YOU...

I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT *HER!*

HER! THA' INFURIATIN', INSUFFERABLE, MEDDLIN' *MECHANIKA!*

YOU SHOULDN'T BE MAD AT LADY MECHANIKA. IT'S NOT HER FAULT.

I'M THE ONE WHO, WHO MADE A MESS OF EVERY-THING. I'M THE ONE WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA TO BANISH THAT FAIRY.*

I'M NOT SORRY ABOUT THAT, THOUGH. NOT SORRY WE BANISHED THAT EVIL LIFE-STEALING WITCH!

*SEE *LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.*

IT'S NO' YOUR FAULT. IT WAS MECHANIKA--

IT WAS ME, UNCLE ARCHIE. IT WAS MY IDEA. LADY MECHANIKA ONLY HELPED BECAUSE I BEGGED HER TO.

BUT SHE--

IF YOU WANT TO HATE SOMEONE, YOU SHOULD HATE ME. IT WAS ALL MY FAULT! I JUST...

I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO DIE!

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE ALONE.

OH FRED, I...I'M SORRY I... IT'S NO' THA' I WANTED TO LEAVE YOU, IT'S JUST...I...I NEEDED... YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.

B'SIDES, YOU HAVE THE PROFESSOR...

GRANDPA IS ALL I HAVE LEFT OF PAPA. BUT YOU...

YOU'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT OF MOMMY.

I...I DIDN'...

IT'S OKAY, UNCLE ARCHIE. I'M SORRY IF YOU HATE ME NOW, AND I'M SORRY YOU FEEL I RUINED YOUR LIFE, BUT I'M NOT SORRY YOU'RE ALIVE.

DON'T WORRY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME BY TO CHECK IN ON ME ANYMORE. I'LL BE FINE.

I'M USED TO BEING ALONE.

I...I'M SORRY ABOUT VANYA. I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED IT...I SHOULD HAVE FOUND A WAY TO SAVE HIM.

IT IS NO FAULT OF YOURS. VANYA WAS SOLDIER. I KNOW HE WAS PROUD TO SERVE YOU, FOR HIS PRINCESS AND FOR HIS COUNTRY.

«TYGYN? WHAT IS WRONG?»*

DEATH SEEMS TO FOLLOW ME EVERY-WHERE.

HE SAYS WE SHOULD HAVE ARRIVED AT VILLAGE HOURS AGO.

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

HEAR WHAT?

I KNOW WE'VE PASSED THAT TREE BEFORE. WE'RE GOING IN CIRCLES.

TYGYN SAYS SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT, HE NEVER GETS LOST. WHERE HAS THAT CRAZY BIRD OF HIS FLOWN OFF TO? JUST WHEN BIRD WOULD BE USEFUL!

LESHY...

BAH! NO FUN! NO FUN AT ALL!

OVER THERE! THERE'S A LIGHT!

WHERE? I DO NOT SEE ANY LIGHT.

KAW KAW

KAW

⟨THEY'RE BACK! THEY'RE BACK!⟩

MAMA!

YOU'RE NOT MY MAMA.

NO, I'M AFRAID NOT. YOU MUST BE YOUNG CHARLES.

⟨ELLEY! CHARLIE! WHERE ARE YOU--⟩

⟨GREETINGS, MADAME OYUNSKAYA. YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN! VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD! I SPEAK YAKUT TOO, IF YOU PREFER!⟩

⟨I AM YEVGENY SERGEYEVICH, INTERPRETER FOR HER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS MARIA ALEXANDROVNA. AND THIS IS LADY MECHANIKA, WHO HAS COME ALL THE WAY FROM ENGLAND FOR VERY IMPORTANT MISSION! SHE WILL EXPLAIN AND I WILL TRANSLATE...⟩

⟨OH. YOU WERE NOT SENT BY THE UNIVERSITY?⟩

⟨OH! YOU MUST BE FROM THE UNIVERSITY!⟩

⟨I SENT SO MANY MESSAGES...I WAS AFRAID YOU WOULD NEVER RESPOND!⟩

⟨I AM AYTA OYUNSKAYA. MY HUSBAND IS THE ONE WHO FOUND THE FOSSIL, THE TOOTH! YOU HAVE A PLAN, YES? FOR A RESCUE?⟩

NO. WE WERE SENT BY THE PRINCESS, TO FIND CHARLES AND HIS PARENTS, MR. AND MRS. OWEN. ARE THEY HERE?

⟨ONLY CHARLIE IS HERE. THEY LEFT HIM IN MY CARE, WHILE THEY WENT WITH MY HUSBAND AND THE OTHER SCIENTISTS TO EXPLORE THE LAKE.⟩

⟨THEY'VE BEEN MISSING NOW FOR TWO MONTHS.⟩

⟨OH! YOUR EYES!⟩

I HAVE A CONDITION THAT CAUSES THEM TO APPEAR RED. DON'T WORRY, IT'S HARMLESS.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EXPEDITION? DID YOU FIND ANY WRECKAGE FROM THEIR BOAT?

⟨NO, NOTHING. WELL, WE DID FIND ONE OF THE UNIVERSITY SCIENTISTS.⟩

YOU DID? WHERE IS HE NOW? WAS HE INJURED?

⟨HE WAS DEAD.⟩

⟨PLEASE COME IN, WE CAN TALK MORE OUT OF THE COLD.⟩

〈MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME. BRING YOUR PUPPY.〉

HE'S NOT EXACTLY A PUPPY.

〈I RECOGNIZE A WOLF PUP WHEN I SEE ONE. IT'S OKAY TO BRING HIM INSIDE. THE CHILDREN WILL ENJOY PLAYING WITH HIM.〉

〈LET ME HEAT UP SOME WATER AND GET SOME BANDAGES. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU ENCOUNTERED SOME TROUBLE IN THE PASS. I CAN CLEAN YOUR WOUNDS WHILE WE--〉

BANG BANG

DULEY!

〈DULEY, HONEY... IT'S OKAY. WE JUST HAVE A FEW VISITORS.〉

BANG

〈I'M SORRY. HE GETS LIKE THIS WHEN HE'S ANXIOUS OR UPSET.〉

SHOULD WE LEAVE?

〈NO, NO, PLEASE, MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE. I'LL JUST GET HIM SETTLED AND BE RIGHT BACK.〉

〈COME ON, DULEY. ELLEY, CHARLIE, YOU TOO. LET'S GO GET READY FOR BED.〉

ARE YOU GOING TO FIND MY MOM AND DAD?

I WILL TRY MY VERY BEST TO DO SO, CHARLIE.

CHARLIE, LADY MECHANIKA IS GREATEST HEROINE IN ALL OF ENGLAND! THAT IS WHY HER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS ENTRUSTED HER WITH FINDING YOUR PARENTS.

IF ANYONE CAN FIND THEM, SHE CAN!

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MISS MECHANIKA, BUT TYGYN ASKS IF YOU NEED ANYTHING ELSE FROM HIM? HE IS ANXIOUS TO SEE HIS OWN FAMILY.

THEY LIVE HERE IN VILLAGE. HE WILL STAY WITH THEM UNTIL WE ARE READY TO RETURN.

OH, OF COURSE. THANK YOU, MR. TYGYN. WE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT HERE WITHOUT YOU.

LOOK AT THESE.

EVERY DRAWING... ALL ARE OF LAKE MONSTER! DO YOU THINK HE HAS SEEN IT IN TRUTH?

PERHAPS. OR PERHAPS IT'S JUST HIS IMAGINATION. THEY'VE PROBABLY BEEN TALKING ABOUT IT EVER SINCE...

ZHENYA...

ZHENYA, WHAT IS THIS?

THAT MUST BE LESHY, A FOREST SPIRIT WHO PLAYS TRICKS ON TRAVELERS, CAUSING THEM TO GO IN CIRCLES UNTIL THEY...

IT...IT IS JUST COINCIDENCE, I AM SURE! THERE ARE MANY SUCH TALES IN RUSSIA. WE SAY THERE ARE SPIRITS IN EVERY TREE AND LAKE AND RIVER, EVEN IN OVENS AND DOORWAYS!

WHENEVER ANYTHING GOES WRONG, WE BLAME IT ON SOME MISCHIEVOUS SPIRIT!

THERE'S SOMETHING...

...SOMETHING FAMILIAR...

⟨MY APOLOGIES. COME SIT IN THE KITCHEN AND LET ME TREAT YOUR WOUNDS.⟩

⟨HE...HE'S AS OKAY AS HE CAN BE.⟩

IS YOUR SON OKAY?

⟨HE WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. HE USED TO BE SUCH A BRIGHT BOY, DESTINED TO BECOME A GREAT HEALER, LIKE HIS GRANDFATHER.⟩

⟨OUR HEAD SHAMAN SAID HE SHOWED POTENTIAL, AND HAD AGREED TO TAKE HIM AS AN APPRENTICE, ONCE HE REACHED TEN YEARS.⟩

⟨BUT NOW...NOW HE CAN'T EVEN SPEAK. HE JUST SITS AND DRAWS OR STARES INTO SPACE.⟩

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

⟨THE DRAGON TOOK HIM.⟩

⟨IT HAPPENED ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO. HIS FRIENDS DARED HIM TO TAKE A BOAT OUT ONTO THE LAKE. DULEY... MY SON WAS VERY BRIGHT BUT ALSO VERY ADVENTUROUS.⟩

⟨THE OTHER BOYS STAYED BY THE SHORE. THEY CLAIM THEY DIDN'T SEE CLEARLY WHAT HAPPENED. ONE MINUTE HE WAS IN THE BOAT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE. THE NEXT, HE AND THE BOAT WERE GONE. VANISHED.⟩

⟨NO ONE KNOWS FOR CERTAIN. ONE DAY SIX MONTHS AFTER HE DISAPPEARED, SOME FISHERMEN FOUND HIM LOST IN A DAZE, WANDERING ABOUT THE WOODS BY THE LAKE.⟩

⟨HE COULDN'T TELL US WHERE HE'D BEEN. HE COULDN'T SPEAK AT ALL. THE SHAMANS SAY HE WALKS ANOTHER PLANE NOW.⟩

JUST LIKE THE SCIENCE EXPEDITION.

⟨YES.⟩

HOW DID YOU FIND DULEY? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

〈I DON'T KNOW IF HE EVEN RECOGNIZES WHO I AM.〉

〈ALL MY LIFE I HAVE HEARD TALES OF THE DRAGON IN THE LAKE, BUT I NEVER TRULY BELIEVED IT. I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT SILLY THAT THE FISHERMEN REFUSED TO VENTURE PAST THE SHALLOWS.〉

〈EVEN AFTER DULEY WENT MISSING, I THOUGHT SOME KIND OF HORRIBLE ACCIDENT...AND WHEN HE RETURNED, I WAS JUST HAPPY HE WAS ALIVE.〉

〈MY HUSBAND, THOUGH...HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH FINDING WHATEVER HAD DONE THIS TO OUR BOY. HE SPENT MONTHS UPON MONTHS SEARCHING THE LAKE.〉

〈AND THEN HE FOUND THAT TOOTH. THAT STUPID TOOTH!〉

〈I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A DRAGON OR SOME KIND OF PREHISTORIC CREATURE, BUT THERE IS **SOMETHING** IN THAT LAKE, SOMETHING ENORMOUS!〉

〈WHATEVER IT IS, IT HAS MY HUSBAND, AND CHARLIE'S PARENTS AND THE OTHER SCIENTISTS!〉

YOU THINK THE CREATURE ABDUCTED THEM?

〈YES. EVERYONE ELSE THINKS THEY MUST ALL BE DEAD. EATEN BY THE DRAGON, OR DROWNED.〉

〈BUT DULEY WAS MISSING FOR SIX MONTHS! THE DRAGON DIDN'T EAT HIM OR HURT HIM, NOT PHYSICALLY.〉

〈THEY ARE ALIVE, I TELL YOU!〉

〈THE DRAGON MUST HAVE TAKEN THEM SOMEWHERE, HIS LAIR, WHEREVER THAT MIGHT BE.〉

〈FIND THE DRAGON'S LAIR, AND YOU'LL FIND CHARLIE'S PARENTS...AND MY HUSBAND!〉

〈I AM THANKFUL. SO VERY THANKFUL.〉

〈YOU WILL TRY TO RESCUE THEM, WON'T YOU?〉

YES. THAT'S WHY WE'VE COME.

〈YOU CAN STAY HERE TONIGHT. I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE LAKE AND THE SCIENTISTS' CAMP IN THE MORNING...〉

〈DULEY? WHAT IS IT, DARLING? WHY AREN'T YOU IN BED?〉

VEED.

VEED.

〈WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?〉

〈DULEY! YOU'RE SPEAKING!〉

〈I DO NOT THINK HE CAN SEE US. HAS HE EVER BEEN IN TRANCE BEFORE?〉

〈NO, NEVER...〉

VEED.

〈I...I THINK HIS MESSAGE IS MEANT FOR YOU.〉

"VEED." WHAT IS "VEED"?

IT MEANS, "SEE."

=GASP!=

I'VE SEEN HER! I'VE SEEN HER BEFORE!

MORANA...

〈I DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHY WOULD DULEY DRAW THIS? YOU SAY YOU HAVE SEEN HER BEFORE?〉

I...I'M NOT CERTAIN...I THOUGHT...WHO IS SHE?

〈MORANA, GODDESS OF WINTER AND DEATH, WHO GUIDES OUR SPIRITS TO THE AFTERLIFE.〉

〈SHE SHOWS HERSELF TO MORTALS ONLY WHEN...〉

WHEN...?

"<...WHEN THEY ARE ABOUT TO DIE...>"

Chapter Three

HOW'S YOUR SON, DULEY?

〈HE IS WELL BUT HE HAS NOT SPOKEN AGAIN. IT IS AS IF LAST NIGHT NEVER HAPPENED.〉

〈I BELIEVE HIS SPIRIT SELF WALKS THE HIGHER PLANES, WHERE THE SHAMANS GO DURING THEIR TRANCES. BUT HE IS LOST THERE, OR TRAPPED.〉

〈I HAVE HEARD OF A POWERFUL SHAMAN A FEW WEEKS' JOURNEY AWAY. PERHAPS SHE CAN HELP DULEY FIND HIS WAY BACK TO OUR WORLD.〉

〈I SHALL TAKE DULEY TO HER, AFTER YOU FIND NYURGUN, MY HUSBAND.〉

I WILL DO MY BEST, AYTA, BUT...THEY'VE BEEN MISSING FOR A LONG TIME.

〈YOU WILL SUCCEED. THIS I BELIEVE IS THE MEANING OF THE MESSAGE DULEY DELIVERED.〉

〈I BELIEVE HIS DRAWING OF THE WINTER QUEEN FORETELLS THE DEATH OF THE DRAGON, AND HE GAVE IT TO YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE MEANT TO DEFEAT IT, AND BRING NYURGUN AND THE OTHERS HOME.〉

I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT.

〈DO YOU EVER DREAM TRUE, MISS MECHANIKA? HAVE DREAMS THAT COME TO PASS?〉

I ONLY SEEM TO HAVE NIGHTMARES.

〈I BELIEVE YOU BEAR THE GIFT OF THE SHAMANS, AS DULEY DOES. THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE SEEN VISIONS OF THE WINTER QUEEN, THE KEEPER OF SOULS.〉

YOU DON'T THINK IT FORETELLS MY OWN DEATH?

〈NO. MOST MORTALS ONLY SEE HER WHEN DEATH IS NEAR, THIS IS TRUE.〉

〈BUT THE SHAMANS CAN SEE THINGS THAT OTHERS CANNOT.〉

〈AT TIMES YOU SENSE THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SEEN, IS THIS NOT SO?〉

I, I GUESS... SOMETIMES...

〈IT WAS SO WITH DULEY AS WELL. AT LEAST IT WAS BEFORE THE DRAGON TOOK HIM.〉

HOW LONG HAS THE DRAGON BEEN TAKING PEOPLE?

〈AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER. EVEN AS A CHILD I WAS WARNED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE LAKE WATERS.〉

〈MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD US A STORY, A LEGEND OF THE TIME WHEN GODS WALKED THE EARTH, OF A DRAGON GODDESS WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A HUMAN MAN, AND THEY HAD A CHILD.〉

〈BUT WHEN THE GODS AGREED TO LEAVE THE MORTAL WORLD, OR WERE BANISHED DEPENDING ON WHO TELLS THE STORY, THE GODDESS WAS FORCED TO LEAVE HER SON BEHIND, FOR HE WAS HALF MORTAL AND COULD NOT LIVE IN THE HEAVENS.〉

〈SO HE WAS LEFT IN THE MORTAL WORLD, TO DWELL ALONE FOR ALL ETERNITY, IN A LAKE FORMED OF HIS MOTHER'S TEARS.〉

〈THAT IS THE LEGEND MY PEOPLE TELL OF THE DRAGON IN THE LAKE.〉

〈THIS IS WHERE THE SCIENTISTS STAYED WHEN THEY WERE WORKING, BETWEEN EXCURSIONS OUT ON THE WATER. WE LEFT THEIR...〉

〈SOMEONE HAS BEEN HERE!〉

〈THINGS ARE MISSING! MAYBE THE DRAGON LET THEM GO, AND THEY RETURNED HERE!〉

〈BUT WHY DID THEY NOT GO TO THE VILLAGE? PERHAPS THEY ARE THERE NOW! WE NEED TO--〉

AYTA, I'M SORRY, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE THEY RETURNED. WE ENCOUNTERED A GROUP OF THIEVES ON THE WAY HERE. THEY HAD STOLEN ITEMS FROM THE CAMP.

〈OH.〉

〈OH, WELL. AT LEAST THEY DID NOT STEAL THE EQUIPMENT. YOU CAN STILL SEND MESSAGES TO THE UNIVERSITY.〉

〈AND THIS IS THE SUIT THE DIVER WAS WEARING WHEN WE FOUND HIM.〉

IT'S BADLY DAMAGED. I HAD HOPED WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE IT TO SEARCH THE LAKE.

THEY HAD TWO DIVING SUITS!

DMITRI LET ME TRY ON THE HELMET, WHEN HE WAS TEACHING ME HOW TO PUMP AIR FOR THE SUIT!

I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO WITH THEM AND HELP, BUT MOTHER SAID I HAD TO STAY BEHIND WITH MRS. OYUNSKAYA.

THE SUIT'S NOT HERE! I GUESS THEY TOOK IT WITH THEM ON THE BOAT.

THERE'S BEEN NO SIGN OF THEIR BOAT? NO WRECKAGE WAS EVER FOUND?

‹NO, NOTHING. IT DISAPPEARED ALONG WITH THE TEAM.›

IT MAY HAVE WASHED ASHORE ON THAT ISLAND. DID ANYONE SEARCH THERE?

‹NO. NO ONE DARED TO GO OUT ON THE WATERS AFTER WE FOUND THE REMAINS OF THE DIVER.›

WE'LL SEARCH THERE FIRST.

YOU WON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND AGAIN, WILL YOU? I WANT TO HELP RESCUE MOTHER AND FATHER!

CHARLIE, THERE'S A VERY IMPORTANT JOB I NEED YOU TO DO.

THERE IS?

I NEED SOMEONE TO CARE FOR THE PUP WHILE WE'RE AWAY.

WE CAN'T TAKE HIM ON THE BOAT, AND I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE HIM ALL ALONE.

WILL YOU TAKE CARE OF HIM? HE LOST HIS MOTHER AND FATHER TOO.

HE'S ALL ALONE?

HE WON'T BE ALONE IF YOU TAKE CARE OF HIM.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM.

HMMM...WE ARE GOING TO HUNT DRAGON IN THIS TINY LITTLE BOAT?

NO.

I AM GOING TO HUNT THE DRAGON IN THIS TINY LITTLE BOAT.

I'M GOING ALONE...

THUMP

YOU SEE? HOW WOULD YOU STEER BOAT *AND* ROW *AND* SHOOT MONSTER ALL BY YOURSELF?

I WOULD'VE FOUND A WAY. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU COME.

WITH MUCH RESPECT, MISS MECHANIKA, YOU CANNOT STOP US. PRINCESS HIRE US, NOT YOU.

VANYA'S SPIRIT WOULD NOT REST IF WE DO NOT FINISH MISSION.

AND WE ARE NOT SCARED OF LAKE MONSTER. YOU ARE GREAT HEROINE. YOU WILL KILL IT.

I'M NO HEROINE. TOO MANY HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF ME. AND I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE GETTING HURT.

I HAVE FAITH.

MORE TO LEFT, BORYA.

HOW WILL WE FIND MONSTER?

WE'LL TRY SEARCHING THE ISLAND FIRST. THAT SEEMS THE MOST LIKELY LOCATION FOR THE CREATURE'S LAIR.

AYTA SAID HER HUSBAND SEARCHED ISLAND WHEN DULEY WAS MISSING BUT HE FOUND NOTHING.

THE ENTRANCE MAY BE UNDER-WATER.

I WISH LEWIS WAS HERE. HE WOULD'VE FOUND A WAY TO REPAIR THAT DIVING SUIT.

LEWIS?

MY... PARTNER. AN ENGINEERING GENIUS.

WE WERE ONCE HIRED TO RETRIEVE AN ARTIFACT FROM A SUNKEN SHIP, AND HE DESIGNED AND BUILT AN UNDERWATER VEHICLE THAT COULD SEARCH THE OCEAN FLOOR.

AH, THAT WOULD BE USEFUL. WHY HE NOT COME ON MISSION?

I...IT'S A LONG STORY.

PULL UP ONTO THE BEACH. I'LL--

WAIT, OVER THERE BY ROCKS! I THINK I SEE SOMETHING...

I SEE IT! THERE'S A BOAT, WRECKED AMONG THE ROCKS.

HALLOO! IS ANYONE ON BOARD?

THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY SURVIVORS MAKING IT ASHORE.

STAY BACK. I'LL GET THE BOAT OUT OF THE WATER.

SQUEEF

THUNK

LET'S GO HAVE A LOOK, SHALL WE?

THIS WAS DEFINITELY THEIR BOAT. LOOK!

AH! THERE IS SECOND DIVING SUIT!

AND THIS ONE APPEARS TO BE INTACT--

"MISS MECHANIKA!"

HE MUST'VE BEEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP. NO ONE ELSE IS ON BOARD?

NYET.

IT LOOK LIKE BOAT HAS NO DAMAGE, AS IF SOMETHING JUST FLIP IT OVER AND EVERYONE FALL OUT.

OR WAS TAKEN.

THIS MUST BE MR. OR MRS. OWEN'S JOURNAL. IT SAYS THEY DETECTED A LARGE CREATURE SWIMMING BENEATH THE BOAT.

THE SIGNAL FROM THEIR ECHO LOCATION DEVICE SEEMED TO ATTRACT IT, BUT IT NEVER SURFACED AND THEY NEVER SAW WHAT IT WAS.

BUT LISTEN TO THIS!

"WE MAY HAVE FOUND THE CREATURE'S HOME! THERE IS A LARGE TRENCH AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE. SENSORS WERE UNABLE TO DETERMINE ITS DEPTH. DIMITRI IS GOING DOWN TO INVESTIGATE."

THAT WAS THE LAST ENTRY.

I THINK THIS HAS COORDINATES FOR TRENCH.

GOOD. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET THIS BOAT AND THE DIVING SUIT OPERATIONAL...

MECHANIKA CITY

HAW... HAW...

WHA... HUH...

SPLASH

WAKE UP!

WHA' THE...FRED? WHA' ARE YOU--

GET UP! WE'RE GOING AFTER LADY MECHANIKA!

WHA?! NO' BLOODY LIKELY!

YES WE ARE, YOU BIG, SELFISH NINNY! SHE'S IN TROUBLE AND WE NEED TO GO HELP HER!

OW! QUIT IT!

SPLASH

HEY!

THUD

THUNK

I'M NO' GOIN' ANYWHERE!

YES YOU ARE!

I'D GO WITHOUT YOU IF I COULD!

BUT THE STUPID AIRSHIP PEOPLE WON'T LET ME ON BOARD WITHOUT A SO-CALLED ADULT SO...

YOU'RE GOING!

BOLLOCKS!

THEY'RE ALL EMPTY. I POURED THEM ALL DOWN THE DRAIN.

YOU DID WHA'?!

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU TO GET SLOSHED EVERY DAY!

I TOLD YOU, I AM NOT--

STOP ACTING LIKE A BABY! THROWING TANTRUMS JUST BECAUSE WE WOULDN'T LET YOU DIE FOR SOME STUPID LIFE-STEALING DEMON!

SHE WASN' STEALIN' MY LIFE, SHE...SHE GAVE IT MEANING!

YOU DON' UNDERSTAND...IT WAS FOR MY ART! IT WAS ALL FOR MY ART...

YOU NEVER NEEDED HER BEFORE TO CREATE YOUR ART!

IT WASN' THE SAME! I NEVER FELT SO ALIVE, SO CREATIVE AN' INSPIRED! EVERY-THING FELT SO EASY, SO--

BECAUSE YOU WERE CHEATING!

I... WHA'?

YOU WERE CHEATING! JUST LIKE THAT BRATTY CORDELIA, WHO TRIED TO COPY FROM MY ARITHMETIC EXAM!

WHICH I RECEIVED THE HIGHEST MARKS ON, BY THE WAY, BECAUSE I PUT IN THE WORK! I STUDIED HARD!

BUT INSTEAD OF PUTTING IN THE TIME, YOU WANTED TO GET ALL THE RESULTS WITHOUT DOING ANY OF THE WORK!

NO, I--

THAT'S CHEATING! AND NOW YOU'RE JUST SULKING BECAUSE YOU LOST YOUR WAY TO CHEAT!

I...I...

AND EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE BEING A STUPID, SELFISH, UNGRATEFUL CHEAT, LADY MECHANIKA STILL RISKED HER LIFE TO SAVE YOURS!

AND WHAT DID SHE GET FOR HER TROUBLE? YOU SAYING YOU HATED HER!

I NEVER SAID--

LADY MECHANIKA IS ALWAYS GOING OUT OF HER WAY TO HELP EVERYONE ELSE. NOW WE NEED TO GO HELP HER!

THWAK

WE'RE THE ONLY FAMILY SHE HAS! SHE HAS NO ONE ELSE, NO ONE! AND YOU NEVER ABANDON FAMILY!

I...

NEVER!

EVEN IF THEY'RE CHEATERS...

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE SHE IS...

SHE'S IN SIBERIA!

THAT'S A BIG PLACE!

WE'LL GO ASK THE PRINCESS!

PRINCESS? WHA' PRINCESS...

AH, VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD! THIS BOAT MUCH BETTER FOR HUNTING DRAGON!

I'M GLAD YOU APPROVE.

YOU KNOW HOW TO OPERATE THIS...THIS, HOW YOU SAY, ECHO DEVICE?

I AM NOT AN EXPERT LIKE MY PARTNER LEWIS, BUT I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE BASICS.

CLICK

FOR OUR PURPOSES, WE SIMPLY NEED TO TURN IT ON AND HOPE THE SIGNAL ATTRACTS THE DRAGON.

I'VE EQUIPPED EACH OF THESE DARTS WITH A TRACKING DEVICE, ANOTHER OF MR. LEWIS'S INVENTIONS.

IF I CAN MANAGE TO SHOOT ONE INTO THE CREATURE, THE DART WILL SEND US A SIGNAL. THEN WE CAN FOLLOW IT STRAIGHT TO THE DRAGON'S LAIR.

ping

EXCELLENT! YOUR MR. LEWIS MUST BE SUPER GENIUS!

INDEED HE IS.

I ONLY HAVE THREE OF HIS DARTS SO WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE EACH SHOT COUNT.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE MONITORS, AND LET ME KNOW IF THEY START FLUCTUATING ERRATICALLY. THAT WOULD MEAN SOMETHING IS MOVING BELOW US.

WE ARE APPROACHING TRENCH!

CIRCLE AROUND THE AREA SLOWLY. LET'S SEE IF THE ECHO SIGNAL LURES THE CREATURE OUT.

MISS MECHANIKA!

I THINK SIGNAL IS MOVING ON MONITOR...

I'M READY.

SIGNAL IS GETTING BIGGER!

I SEE IT... SOMETHING IN THE WATER...

SIGNAL IS GOING CRAZY!

COME ON...

bloop

IT'S JUST A FISH!

OH! WELL, THAT WAS EXCITING!

"KEEP WATCHING THE MONITORS. LET ME KNOW IF YOU SEE ANYTHING ELSE UNUSUAL."

:GASP!:

WHAT IS IT? DID YOU SEE DRAGON?

I...I THOUGHT I SAW...

NO, IT WAS NOTHING.

I'VE BEEN STARING AT THE WATERS SO LONG I'M STARTING TO IMAGINE THINGS.

THE ECHO SIGNAL ISN'T WORKING. LET'S GET THE DIVING SUIT READY.

I'M GOING DOWN.

KEEP THE STUN GUN NEARBY, BORYA, JUST IN CASE. BUT DON'T SHOOT UNLESS IT ATTACKS.

DA.

CAN YOU HEAR ME, MISS MECHANIKA?

YES, I HEAR YOU CLEARLY.

VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD.

WARN ME IF YOU SEE ANYTHING ON THE MONITORS!

CAN YOU STILL HEAR ME, MISS MECHANIKA?!

YES! YOU DON'T NEED TO YELL!

OH, MY APOLOGIES. BORYA SAYS YOU SHOULD REACH TRENCH SOON.

I SEE IT.

ENTERING THE TRENCH NOW...

MISS MECHANIKA! SIGNAL IS ON MONITOR AGAIN! LIKE LAST TIME!

IS THERE FISH AGAIN?

YES. LOTS OF FISH. I MUST'VE STARTLED THEM.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A VAST NETWORK OF PASSAGES DOWN HERE. THE DRAGON COULD BE HIDING IN ANY OF THEM.

BRRR

GASP!

MECHANIKA! WHAT IS IT!

MISS MECHANIKA!

THE DRAGON...

EASY NOW...

I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU...

PFFT

SWOOSH

I GOT HIM! PULL ME BACK UP!

〈MISS MECHANIKA SAYS TO PULL HER UP! SHE HIT DRAGON WITH--〉

KLONK

=GASP!=

〈WHAT...〉

〈DRAGON!〉

ZHENYA? WHAT'S HAPPENING? IS THE DRAGON UP THERE?

ZHENYA!

〈IT IS COMING STRAIGHT AT US! SHOOT IT! SHOOT IT!〉

〈GET BACK INSIDE! I WILL TAKE CARE OF DRAGON!〉

ROAR

MY LORD...IT'S ENORMOUS...

SPLASH

<IT IS RUNNING AWAY!>

MISS MECHANIKA?! ARE YOU OKAY?! DRAGON WAS JUST HERE! IT WAS HUGE!

I SEE IT! IT'S DIVING BACK DOWN!

IT WENT BACK INSIDE THE TRENCH!

<ALL IS WELL! DRAGON WENT BACK INTO TRENCH!>

<HAH! DRAGON IS NOT SO SCARY...>

OH BLOODY HELL...

ZHENYA!

THE DRAGON'S COMING BACK!

MOVE! MOVE! IT'S COMING RIGHT AT--

PRESS

NO...

CHOMP

SPLASH

Chapter Four

THE HUMAN MIND IS A RESILIENT THING.

SPLASH

GASP!

ZHENYA?

BORYA!

CAPABLE OF BEARING OCEANS OF GRIEF, AND OF GUILT.

BUT FOR EVERY MIND THERE LIES A LIMIT TO THE AMOUNT OF ANGUISH IT CAN ENDURE.

AND IF LIFE SHOULD DELIVER BURDENS BEYOND THIS POINT?

THE MIND WOULD INEVITABLY...

...BREAK.

LEW... LEWIS? NO... HOW...?

BUMP

FRED! NO...

I...I KILLED THEM...

I KILLED THEM ALL!

GASP!

GLUG GLUG GLUG

POMOGITYA! POMOGITYA!

NO... NO...

NOOOO!

<SHHH! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW! IT'S SAFE HERE!>

<THERE ARE OTHERS IN WATER!>

<GO! HELP THEM! I CAN TEND TO THIS ONE!>

<HERE, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THAT SUIT.>

=HUFF= =HUFF=...THE DRAGON...

OH! YOU'RE ENGLISH! AND A WOMAN!

THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY, THE CREATURE IS GONE.

AND IT HASN'T MISTREATED US, NOT REALLY. IT SEEMS TO THINK OF US AS PETS, LIKE FISH IN A BOWL IT CAN VISIT WHEN THE FANCY STRIKES.

YOU MUST BE MRS. OWEN.

YES, I'M ELIZABETH OWEN. ARE YOU FROM THE UNIVERSITY?

I'M LADY MECHANIKA. THE PRINCESS SENT US TO RESCUE YOU, THOUGH I'VE DONE A RATHER WRETCHED JOB OF IT.

LADY MECHANIKA! OH! I'VE HEARD OF YOU!

I'M VERY GRATEFUL THE PRINCESS WOULD SEND YOU TO HELP US, BUT I'M AFRAID YOU'RE TRAPPED HERE NOW TOO, JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.

THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT.

TRUST ME, WE'VE SEARCHED THE ENTIRE CAVERN. THERE ARE ONLY TWO PASSAGEWAYS, ONE WHERE THE WATER COMES IN AND ONE WHERE THE WATER GOES OUT. BOTH ARE COMPLETELY UNDER WATER.

ALEKSEI, ONE OF OUR CREWMEN, TRIED TO ESCAPE BY HOLDING ONTO THE CREATURE AS IT SWAM OUT. DID HE MAKE IT TO THE SURFACE?

I'M AFRAID NOT. WE FOUND NO SURVIVORS FROM YOUR EXPEDITION.

NONE? WHAT ABOUT OUR CAPTAIN? OR OUR DIVER? HE WASN'T ON BOARD WHEN THE CREATURE CAPSIZED OUR BOAT.

THEY DIDN'T SURVIVE. I'M SORRY.

MISS MECHANIKA!

ZHENYA! ARE YOU OKAY?

DA, DA. BUT MY LEG I THINK IS BROKEN. WHERE IS BORYA?

I'M SORRY, BUT YOUR FRIEND WAS ALREADY DEAD IN THE WATER.

AH NO...

MY SYMPATHIES. SEVERAL OF OUR TEAM DIDN'T SURVIVE THE TRIP DOWN EITHER.

〈THIS IS LADY MECHANIKA. THE PRINCESS SENT HER TO RESCUE US.〉

THIS IS MY HUSBAND MATTHEW, AND NYURGUN AND VASILY. WE'RE ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE EXPEDITION.

MY CONDOLENCES ON YOUR LOSS, LADY MECHANIKA.

WE'RE USING ONE OF THE CAVES AS A SORT OF BURIAL CHAMBER. I'LL LAY YOUR MAN TO REST IN THERE.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE HIM, IF YOU'LL SHOW ME THE WAY?

YES, OF COURSE.

IT'S WARM IN HERE.

GEOTHERMAL VENTS. I BELIEVE THEY AWAKENED THE CREATURE.

YOU THINK IT'S BEEN ASLEEP FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS?

I THINK IT WAS FROZEN IN AN EGG FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS. UNTIL AN EARTHQUAKE OR OTHER PHENOMENON OPENED THE GEOTHERMAL VENTS, HEATING THE AREA ENOUGH FOR THE EGG TO HATCH, LONG AFTER THE REST OF ITS SPECIES HAD BECOME EXTINCT.

VASILY BELIEVES IT IS JUST SOME GIANT FISH FROM THE OCEAN DEPTHS, POSSIBLY OF THE *REGALECIDAE* FAMILY, THAT SWAM IN WHEN IT WAS YOUNG AND BECAME TRAPPED WHEN IT GREW TOO BIG FOR THE PASSAGEWAYS.

ACADEMICS. THE WORLD COULD BE FALLING DOWN ABOUT OUR EARS AND WE STILL WOULDN'T STOP DEBATING OUR HYPOTHESES.

THIS IS OUR BURIAL CHAMBER. MOST OF THE REMAINS WERE ALREADY IN HERE WHEN WE ARRIVED.

THERE ARE SO MANY...

THE CREATURE HAS BEEN ABDUCTING PEOPLE FOR A LONG TIME, PROBABLY HUNDREDS OF YEARS JUDGING FROM THE DECOMPOSITION OF THE BODIES.

ELIZABETH HOPES THAT IT WILL EVENTUALLY RELEASE US, AS IT DID FOR ONE OF THE VILLAGE CHILDREN IT HAD TAKEN.

BUT IT DIDN'T RELEASE ANY OF THESE POOR SOULS.

FAREWELL, BORYA. I'M SORRY I FAILED YOU.

MAY YOUR SPIRIT BE AT--

:GASP!:

LADY MECHANIKA! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I...I'M OKAY. I JUST... I INJURED MY HEAD EARLIER...

COME, LET'S GET YOU BACK TO THE CAMP SO YOU CAN REST.

MISS MECHANIKA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? WHAT HAPPENED?

IT'S NOTHING, I'M FINE. I JUST HAD ANOTHER... HALLUCINATION, VISION...WHATEVER THEY ARE.

〈YOU SEE VISIONS?〉

I DON'T KNOW. AYTA SAID--

〈YOU'VE SEEN AYTA? IS SHE OKAY? AND DULEY AND ELLEY?〉

YOU MUST BE AYTA'S HUSBAND. YES, YOUR FAMILY IS WELL. DULEY GAVE ME A MESSAGE...

〈DULEY IS SPEAKING?!〉

HE WAS IN A TRANCE, AND HE ONLY SAID ONE WORD, "VEED."

〈"SEE"... AND WHAT IS IT THAT YOU SEE, MISS MECHANIKA, WHEN YOU HAVE THESE VISIONS?〉

I...I'VE BEEN SEEING THE DRAGON'S EYE.

〈AH...I BELIEVE THE DRAGON IS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU.〉

COMMUNICATE? YOU MEAN, IN MY MIND?

〈YES. HE'S BEEN APPEARING TO US IN OUR DREAMS. WHENEVER WE SLEEP, WE DREAM OF THE DRAGON.〉

IT'S TRUE, IT HAPPENS TO ALL OF US. AND WE'VE ALL BEEN SLEEPING FAR TOO MUCH, UNNATURALLY SO.

THEY AREN'T FRIGHTFUL DREAMS, NOT NIGHTMARES AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. THEY'RE ACTUALLY... PEACEFUL, HAPPY DREAMS.

〈I BELIEVE THE DRAGON IS TRYING TO TALK TO US. BUT NONE OF US HAS THE ABILITY TO TALK BACK.〉

〈I HAVE TRIED TO ENTER A TRANCE SO I MIGHT SPEAK WITH HIM, BUT I DO NOT HAVE THE GIFT MY SON HAS.〉

〈PERHAPS THAT IS WHY HE LET DULEY GO. BECAUSE HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK WITH HIM.〉

〈YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SPEAK WITH HIM AS WELL, IF YOU DO INDEED BEAR THE SHAMAN'S GIFT. I COULD TRY TO HELP YOU ENTER A TRANCE. WILL YOU TRY?〉

I WILL TRY.

"〈LIE DOWN AND CLOSE YOUR EYES. TRY TO RELAX.〉

"〈IMAGINE A TREE WITH A HOLLOW OPENING AT ITS BASE.〉

"〈GO INSIDE. YOU WILL SEE A STAIRCASE GOING DOWN, DOWN INTO THE EARTH.〉

"〈CONTINUE DOWN THE STAIRS UNTIL YOU REACH THE BOTTOM.〉"

"WHAT WILL I FIND AT THE BOTTOM?"

"〈I CANNOT SAY, IT IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE. IT WILL BE YOUR MIND'S REPRESENTATION OF THE SPIRIT WORLD...〉"

What the...

BOING

Brawr!

Oh! Hello!

So you're the one who's been causing so much trouble.

Brawr!

You don't seem so bad.

Maybe you could help me?

A few of us are trapped in the cave under the lake. Could you help us get out? Take us back to the surface?

GRRRRR

Okay, okay. Guess you don't like that idea.

Brawr!

So why did you let Duley go? Do you remember Duley?

You took him back to the surface.

I see...Duley played with you while he was here. And that made you happy.

So why did you let him leave?

He got sick?

You let him go back to his family so he'd get better. That was very kind of you.

If we stay here, we'll get sick too.

And the others, they all have families as well. There's a boy, Charlie, who needs his mum and dad.

And Duley... Duley's father is trapped down here. You don't want your friend Duley to be sad, do you? He needs his father.

Don't you have a family? Where are the others of your kind?

You've always been alone?

I'm sorry.

I know it's hard being alone, but my kind...we don't belong down here. We can't survive without sun and fresh air.

You need to let us go.

Think of the children!

GRRRRRR

You don't want Duley and Charlie to grow up all alone too, do you?

GRRRRR

And remember all the others you've brought down! How long did they live?

We'll die too if we stay here!

GRRRRR

What if I stay!

If I stay here with you, would you let the others go?

Yes, I'll stay and play with you, for as long as I am able.

BraWr!

THE DRAGON HAS AGREED TO LET YOU GO.

OH, LADY MECHANIKA! YOU DID IT! YOU SAVED US ALL!

WELL, NOT EXACTLY. I PROMISED I WOULD STAY BEHIND.

YOU WHAT? NO, YOU CAN'T STAY HERE!

IT'S THE ONLY WAY.

NO, MISS MECHANIKA! WE CANNOT LEAVE YOU BEHIND!

YOU NEED A DOCTOR, ZHENYA. AND THE OWENS NEED TO GET BACK TO THEIR SON.

THE CREATURE! IT'S BACK!

GO, NOW! BEFORE HE CHANGES HIS MIND!

HE'S PROMISED TO GET YOU TO THE SURFACE. THE METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION MAY BE A BIT UNNERVING, BUT YOU'LL BE SAFE.

THE PRINCESS! WE'LL CONTACT HER, AS SOON AS WE'RE OUT! SHE'LL SEND HELP!

YES! THE PRINCESS! HER FATHER IS TSAR OF ALL RUSSIA! THEY WILL FIND WAY TO RESCUE YOU.

YES, I'M CERTAIN THEY WILL. NOW GO!

WE ARE TO GO INSIDE DRAGON'S MOUTH? ARE WE SURE THIS IS ONLY WAY?

SIGH VERY WELL, VERY WELL.

I'LL BE HERE.

DO NOT WORRY, MISS MECHANIKA! WE WILL SEND HELP FOR YOU! I SWEAR IT!

LONDON, ENGLAND

MR. LEWIS, I PRESUME? FINALLY! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU FOR DAYS!

YOU MUST PREPARE TO DEPART IMMEDIATELY!

UH... WHO, ME?

YOU ARE MR. ARCHIBALD LEWIS, ARE YOU NOT? THE LADY MECHANIKA'S ASSOCIATE?

OH, I UM...

YES, HE IS. I'M WINIFRED THOMSEN, MR. LEWIS'S NIECE.

WHERE'S LADY MECHANIKA? SHE'S IN TROUBLE, ISN'T SHE?

I'M AFRAID SHE IS. I HIRED HER TO FIND AND RESCUE AN EXPEDITION THAT WAS LOST IN THE SIBERIAN MOUNTAINS.

I RECEIVED WORD A FEW DAYS AGO THAT SHE HAD SUCCEEDED, BUT AT THE EXPENSE OF HER OWN FREEDOM.

NOW SHE HERSELF IS TRAPPED UNDER THE LAKE, THE DINOSAUR'S PRISONER.

UH...DID YOU SAY *DINOSAUR?*

WE HAVE TO RESCUE HER!

YES, OF COURSE! PREPARATIONS FOR A RESCUE ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY. WE WERE ONLY WAITING FOR MR. LEWIS TO JOIN THEM.

AND ME AND MONTI!

NOW 'OLD ON THERE! YOU ARE NOT GOIN' TO SIBERIA!
YES, I AM!
I MUST AGREE WITH MR. LEWIS. A CHILD DOES NOT BELONG--
I'M GOING! UNCLE ARCHIE NEEDS ME, AND LADY MECHANIKA NEEDS ME!
HE WOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE IF IT WASN'T FOR ME! HE'D STILL BE PASSED OUT DRUNK!
I SEE. IS THAT WHY YOU NEVER RECEIVED ANY OF MY MESSAGES?
OH, WELL, I...
AND I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF! I'VE BEEN TO GERMANY AND AFRICA AND...
YOU WERE KIDNAPPED!
AND LADY MECHANIKA RESCUED ME! SO NOW I'M GOING TO GO RESCUE HER!
AND NO ONE CAN STOP ME!
I LIKE A YOUNG LADY WHO ISN'T AFRAID TO SPEAK HER MIND. YOU REMIND ME OF MYSELF AT YOUR AGE.
VERY WELL. BUT YOU WILL STAY WITH MRS. OYUNSKAYA IN THE VILLAGE BY THE LAKE. ARE WE ALL AGREED?
I...
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS. WE AGREE.
VERY GOOD. CLARKSON, HAVE THE AIRSHIP PREPPED AND READY TO DEPART AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.
YOU SAID SHE'S TRAPPED UNDER A LAKE?
I'LL NEED TO BRING SOME EQUIPMENT...

MECHANIKA...

MECHANIKA...

BRAWWWR

Thank you, my friend!

HOW...?

Hee hee hee

ZZZZ

THWACK

MECHANIKA!

OH MY GAWD...

WAKE UP, PLEASE WAKE UP! MECHANIKA?

UNGH...

THANK THE LORD! CAN YOU 'EAR ME?

UNGH...NO... ...LE'S GO BACK T' PLAY...

MECHANIKA!

MWA...WHA...LEWIS? ARE YOU...ARE YOU REALLY HERE?

YES, I'M 'ERE. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.

COME, WE 'AVE TO GO BEFORE THE CREATURE RETURNS!

I... MAYBE I SHOULDN'T GO.

WHA'?

I PROMISED I WOULD STAY, IF HE LET THE OTHERS GO.

YOU DIDN' PROMISE TO STAY FOREVER!

BUT MAYBE... MAYBE IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR EVERYONE IF I DID...

IT'S NOT SO BAD HERE, REALLY. IT'S ACTUALLY RATHER NICE. PEACEFUL.

NICE? LOOK AT YOU! I THOUGH' YOU WERE NAUGH' BUT A CORPSE WHEN I CAME UP!

IF YOU STAY ANY LONGER, YOU'LL DIE!

MAYBE THAT'S FOR THE BEST.

WHA' THE BLAZES ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOU'?

I'M A MENACE TO EVERYONE... EVERYONE AROUND ME DIES.

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW...

YOUR OWN SISTER, FRED'S PARENTS...

NO ONE BLAMES YOU FOR THA'.

BUT I DO! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE DEAD BECAUSE OF ME!

WHA' ABOU' ALL THE PEOPLE WHO ARE ALIVE BECAUSE OF YOU? LIKE MR. AND MRS. OWEN WHO ARE AT 'OME NOW WIT' THEIR SON BECAUSE YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE THEIRS?

AN ENTIRE VILLAGE WAS MASSACRED BECAUSE OF MY ACTIONS.

AND I'VE KILLED...

KILLED WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS!

KILLED...

...SOMEONE INNOCENT...

MECHANIKA... WE'VE ALL DONE THINGS IN THE PAST THA' WE REGRET. LORD KNOWS I HAVE.

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES. IT JUST MEANS YOU'RE HUMAN, LIKE THE REST OF US.

BUT WHEN I MAKE MISTAKES, PEOPLE DIE.

YOU SHOULD GO, MR. LEWIS. GO BEFORE THE DRAGON COMES BACK.

NO! I CAN' JUST GO AND...

...I CAN' JUST LET YOU DIE.

MECHANIKA, I KNOW IT'S HARD...NO ONE KNOWS BET'ER THAN I DO WHA' IT'S LIKE TO BE HAUNTED BY GUILT.

AND I UNDERSTAND WANTIN' TO RUN AWAY FROM IT ALL. YOU KNOW I UNDERSTAND THA' MORE THAN ANYONE.

BUT YOU...YOU'RE THE STRONG ONE. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TAKES THE CASES NO ONE ELSE DARES TO TAKE, WHO HELPS THE PEOPLE NO ONE ELSE WILL HELP.

EVEN WHEN THEY WON' THANK YOU FOR IT.

THE BIGGEST, BADDEST MONSTERS OUT THERE, YOU FACED 'EM ALL AND FOUND A WAY TO DEFEAT 'EM.

YOU CAN FACE THIS TOO.

BESIDES, THERE'S A LIT'LE GIRL UP TOP WAITIN' FOR US AND I'M MUCH MORE SCARED OF 'ER THAN ANY DRAGON.

SO YOU'RE EITHER COMIN' WIT' ME, OR WE'RE BOTH STAYIN' 'ERE!

FRED? YOU BROUGHT FRED WITH YOU?

MORE LIKE SHE BROUGH' ME.

AND IF I DON' BRING YOU BACK, SHE'S JUST GOIN' TO COME DOWN 'ERE 'ERSELF AND DRAG YOU OUT!

YES, I SUPPOSE SHE WOULD.

JUST LEAN ON ME.

CAREFUL THERE, LOVE.

'ERE. 'AVE A BIT OF THIS.

I DON'T THINK SPIRITS WOULD BE--

IT'S JUST SOME CONCOCTION THE DOCTORS COOKED UP FOR YOU. LIT'LE MISS WINIFRED TOSSED OUT ALL MY LIQUOR.

DID SHE NOW?

THA' IS ONE VERY STRONG WILLED YOUNG LADY. SHE GOT ALONG FAMOUSLY WIT' THE PRINCESS.

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN AWAY?

ABOUT FOUR MONTHS.

TRULY? IT SEEMS LIKE JUST A FEW DAYS.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO FIND ME? IT'S LIKE A MAZE DOWN HERE.

THE TRACKIN' DEVICE IN ONE OF YOUR DARTS IS STILL ACTIVE. I USED THE--

=GASP!=

THUMP

THUMP

THAT MUST BE ONE OF THE EXPEDITION CREW. MRS. OWEN SAID ONE OF THEM TRIED TO SWIM HIS WAY OUT.

THE OWENS... ZHENYA AND THE OTHER SURVIVORS... THEY ALL MADE IT OUT OKAY?

THEY DID. THEY ALL GOT 'OME SAFELY AND--

KLUNK

BAD PATH

THE DRAGON!

HE'S RIGHT BEHIND US!

THERE'S A NARROW PASSAGE UP AHEAD!

HE WON' BE ABLE TO FIT INSIDE!

VREEEEEEEE

'OLD ON!

THERE! WE'LL BE--

GRRRR

THUMP

WHOA!

KRAK

KLUNK

THE SCOPE IS BROKEN! I CAN'T SEE BEHIND US!

IT'S ALL RIGH'!

KLUNK

WE JUST NEED TO GET THROUGH THIS PASSAGE AND THEN WE'LL BE --

TURN AROUND!

THAT'S THE WAY OUT!

GRRRR

NO! DON'T HURT HIM!

'EY!!!

FIRE

DON' WORRY, I CAN --

WHAT ARE YOU...

FWMP

BOOM

KRM

KRM

KRSH

WHA' THE BLOODY 'ELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOIN'?!

I'M SORRY, BUT WE CAN'T HURT HIM!

WHA' DO YOU MEAN WE CAN' HURT 'IM?!

HE...HE'S LIKE A CHILD...AN INNOCENT! HE DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT ANYONE!

TELL THA' TO ALL THE PEOPLE HE'S KILLED! LIKE THA' POOR SOUL BACK IN THE TUNNEL!

HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND!

HE'S BEEN TRAPPED HERE ALL ALONE FOR LORD KNOWS HOW LONG. HE JUST WANTS SOMEONE TO... TO TALK TO.

BUT THE WAY HE COMMUNICATES... IT MAKES YOU SLEEP MORE AND MORE, UNTIL YOU EVENTUALLY DON'T WAKE UP.

IT'S NOT HIS FAULT, NOT REALLY.

PLEASE, LET'S JUST TRY TO GET OUT OF HERE WITHOUT HURTING HIM.

HUMPH! FINE!

WE NEED TO FIND ANOTHER PASSAGE THA' LEADS OUT...

OVER THERE, IS THAT ONE OF YOUR BEACONS?

YES! WE'RE BACK ON THE TRAIL!

THA' WAS ONE OF MY FIRST BEACONS. WE SHOULD BE CLOSE TO THE EXIT.

NO SIGN OF THE DRAGON.

'OPEFULLY THE EXPLOSION SCARED 'IM AWAY.

THERE! LOOK!

WE MADE IT!

CHOMP

I'M SORRY, MECHANIKA! IT'S EITHER 'IM OR US!

NO, WAIT!

LET ME TRY TO TALK TO HIM.

HOW?

I'LL TRY TO ENTER A TRANCE. I DID IT ONCE BEFORE.

PROMISE YOU WON'T FIRE!

I...

TRUST ME!

I 'OPE YOU KNOW WHA' YOU'RE DOIN'...

ALL RIGH', I'LL WAIT AS LONG AS I CAN...

My friend. I'm sorry.

I know I said I would stay here with you, but it's time for me to return to my own home.

Brawr!

If I stay any longer, I'll die, just like all the others.

Yes, I need to go back to the surface. You...you're okay with me leaving?

Brawr!

Then, why were you chasing us?

BOOM

I'm sorry we shot at you. I didn't want to hurt you...

What? You *want* us to shoot you? No! Why?

MECHANIKA... HURRY!

I know you feel all alone down here but surely...

It can't be that bad...

MECHANIKA! THE SUB CAN' TAKE MUCH MORE!

It... it's never ending for you, isn't it?

But isn't there another...

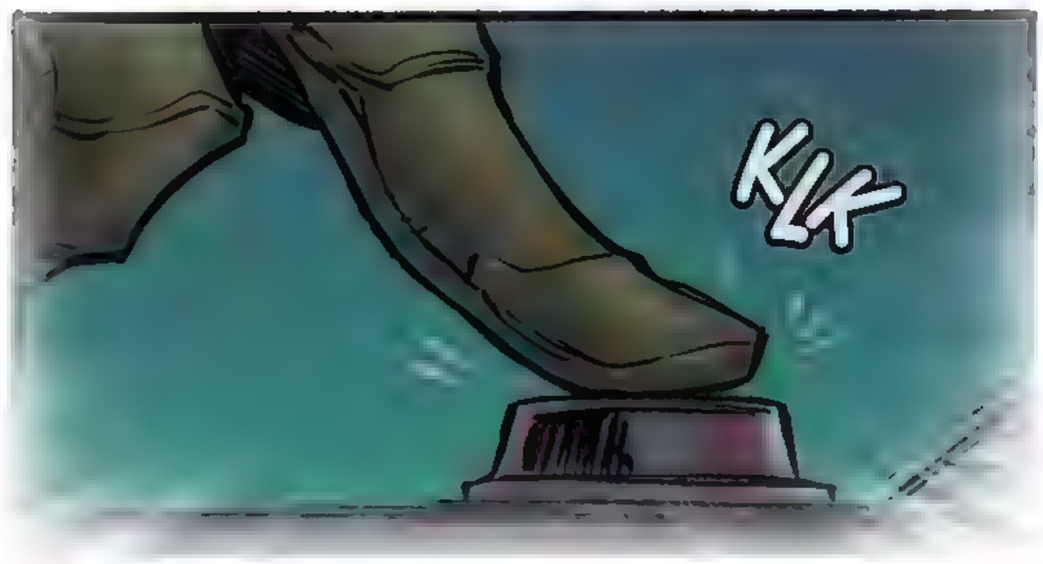
Is this...is this really what you want?

SORRY, MECHANIKA! I CAN' WAIT ANY--

THE SUB IS FALLIN' APART! IT'S EITHER 'IM OR US!

"I KNOW..."

May you finally find peace, my friend...


KLK

VRRR EE EEE EE

I'M SORRY, MECHANIKA. I KNOW THA' MUST'VE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR YOU.

THANK YOU, MR. LEWIS.

AND THANK YOU, FOR COMING TO MY RESCUE.

I KNOW IT MUST'VE BEEN DIFFICULT, THE WAY THINGS ARE BETWEEN US...I KNOW YOU'RE STILL ANGRY WITH ME.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

READY TO GO HOME?

YOU'RE FAMILY.

The End...for now.

COVER GALLERY

Sable

cover art by Joe Benitez & Ceci de la Cruz

cover art by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich

cover art by Joe Benitez & Sabine Rich

cover art by Joe Benitez & Mike Garcia

KICKSTARTER COVER GALLERY

COVER ART BY JOE BENITEZ & BETH SOTELO

COVER ART BY SIYA OUM & BETH SOTELO

COVER ART BY DAVID FINCH,
JOE BENITEZ, & BETH SOTELO

COVER ART BY JOE BENITEZ,
DAVID FINCH, & PETER STEIGERWALD

COVER ART BY JAMIE TYNDALL

COVER ART BY JOE BENITEZ & SIYA OUM

cover art by Siya Oum, Joe Benitez & Beth Sotelo

cover art by Joe Benitez & Steve Firchow

Lady Mechanika Titles:

LADY MECHANIKA
(The Mystery of the Mechanical Corpse)

THE TABLET OF DESTINIES

THE LOST BOYS OF WEST ABBEY

LA DAMA DE LA MUERTE

THE CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

SANGRE

THE MONSTER OF THE MINISTRY OF HELL

THE DEVIL IN THE LAKE

LADY MECHANIKA: STEAMPUNK COLORING BOOK I

LADY MECHANIKA: STEAMPUNK COLORING BOOK II

For more Lady Mechanika, visit:

***BENITEZPRODUCTIONS.COM** and*
FACEBOOK.COM / LADYMECHANIKA

BENITEZ PRODUCTIONS, INC. • **Joe Benitez**: Creative Director / Chief Executive Officer • **Marcia Chen**: Editor-in-Chief / Chief Financial Officer • **Michael Heisler**: Production Director • **Stephanie Reyes**: Office Assistant • **Andria Richard**: Production Assistant • **BENITEZPRODUCTIONS.COM**

IMAGE COMICS, INC. • **Robert Kirkman**: Chief Operating Officer • **Erik Larsen**: Chief Financial Officer • **Todd McFarlane**: President • **Marc Silvestri**: Chief Executive Officer • **Jim Valentino**: Executive Vice President • **Eric Stephenson**: Publisher / Chief Creative Officer • **Nicole Lapalme**: Vice President of Finance • **Leanna Caunter**: Accounting Analyst • **Sue Korpela**: Accounting & HR Manager • **Alex Cox**: Director of Direct Market Sales • **Margot Wood**: Vice President of Book Market Sales • **Chloe Ramos**: Book Market & Library Sales Manager • **José Meza**: Specialty Sales Coordinator • **Pat O'Connell**: Inventory Manager • **Kat Salazar**: Vice President of PR & Marketing • **Cat Nuwer**: Publicist • **Deanna Phelps**: Marketing Design Manager • **Dan Coyle**: Marketing Content Associate • **Jim Viscardi**: Vice President of Business Development • **Lorelei Bunjes**: Vice President of Digital Strategy • **Emilio Bautista**: Digital Sales Coordinator • **Dirk Wood**: Vice President of International Sales & Licensing • **Ryan Brewer**: International Sales & Licensing Manager • **Drew Gill**: Art Director • **Heather Doornink**: Vice President of Production • **Ian Baldessari**: Print Manager • **Melissa Gifford**: Content Manager • **Drew Fitzgerald**: Content Manager • **Erika Schnatz**: Senior Production Artist • **Wesley Griffith**: Production Artist • **Rich Fowlks**: Production Artist • **Jon Schlaffman**: Production Artist • **IMAGECOMICS.COM**

JOE BENITEZ'S

Lady Mechanika™

Discover a steampunk world of airships, monsters, and one courageous but haunted heroine...

Lady Mechanika tries to escape disturbing revelations about her past by embarking on a dangerous hunt for a mythical lake monster that's been terrorizing a remote village in Siberia. But are any creatures more dangerous than the monsters that lurk within the mind?

Set during a fictionalized steampunk Victorian Era, a time when magic and superstition clashed with new scientific discoveries and inventions, LADY MECHANIKA chronicles a young woman's obsessive search for her identity after a mad scientist's horrific experiments left her with mechanical limbs and no memory of her origins.

This volume collects the entire four-issue mini-series, *The Devil in the Lake*, featuring art by guest artist Siya Oum *(Lola XOXO, Fathom)* and including a gorgeous cover gallery with art by series creator Joe Benitez!

BENITEZ PRODUCTIONS

ISBN: 978-1-5343-3630-8

RATED T / TEEN • STEAMPUNK ADVENTURE

IMAGECOMICS.COM
BENITEZPRODUCTIONS.COM